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JUNE 25, 2007

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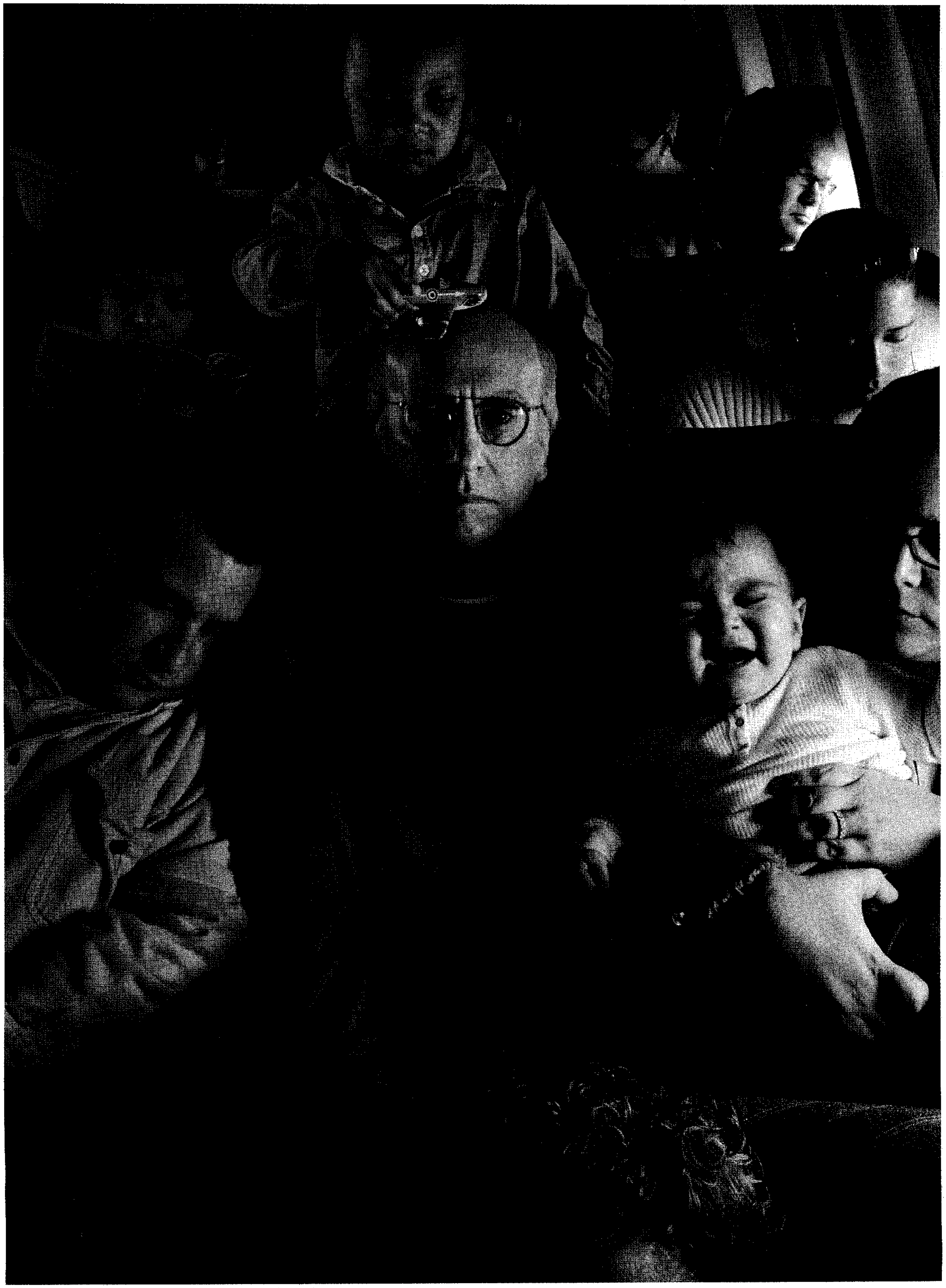

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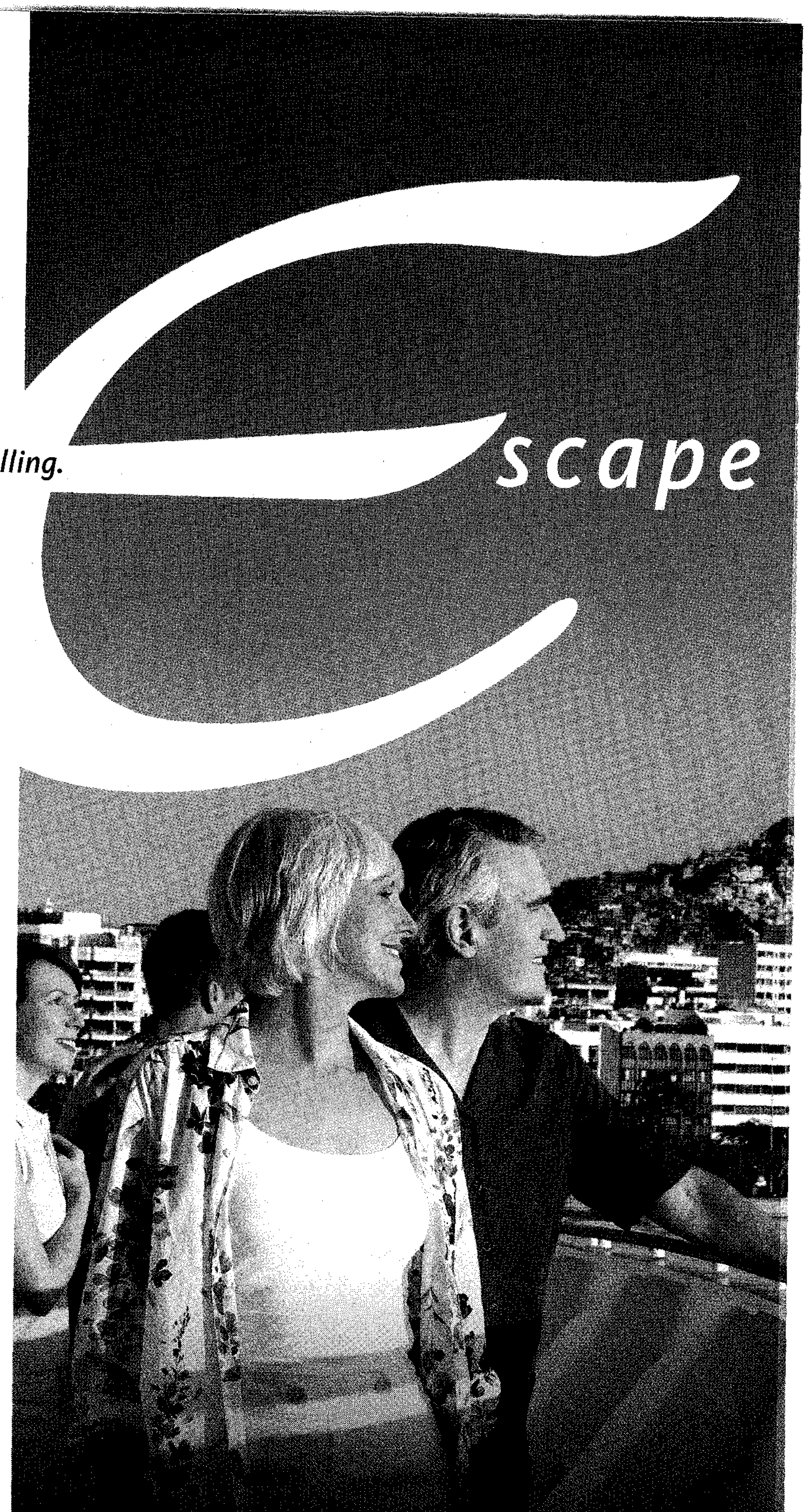

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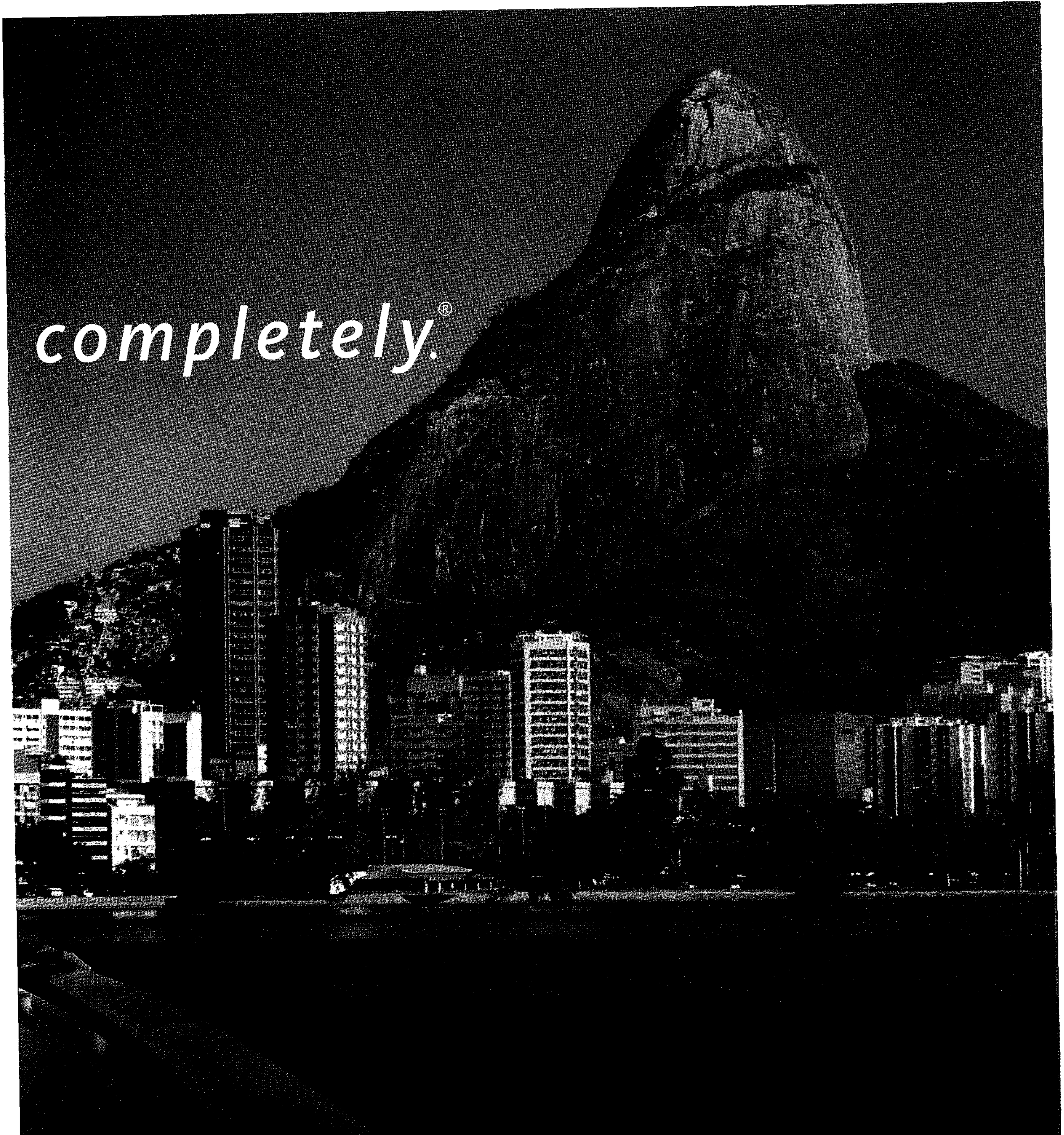

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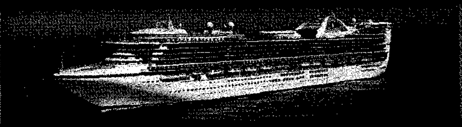

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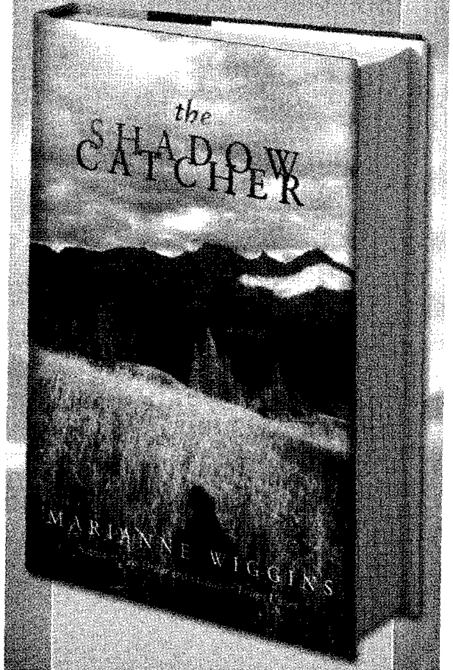

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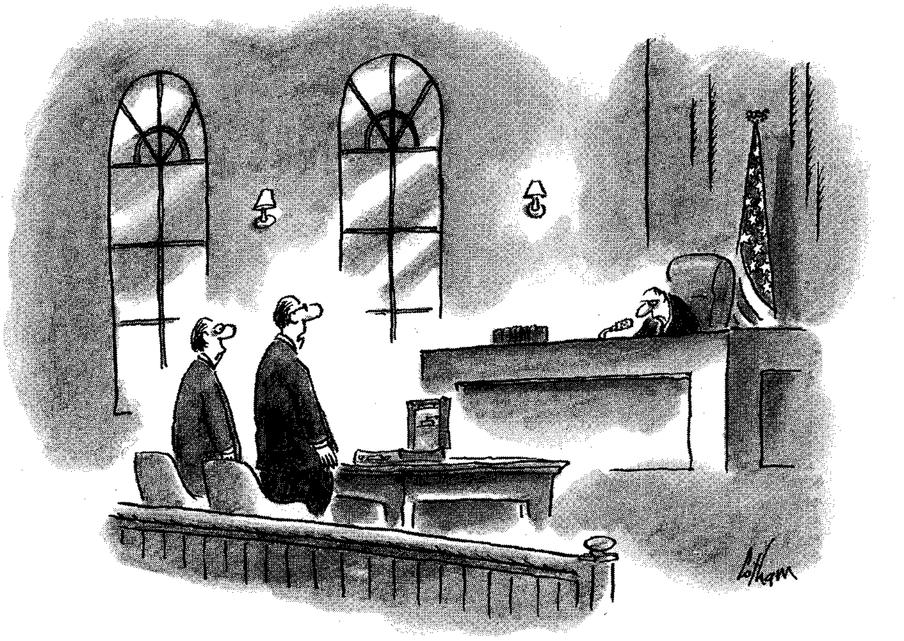
SPOTS *Benoît van Innis*



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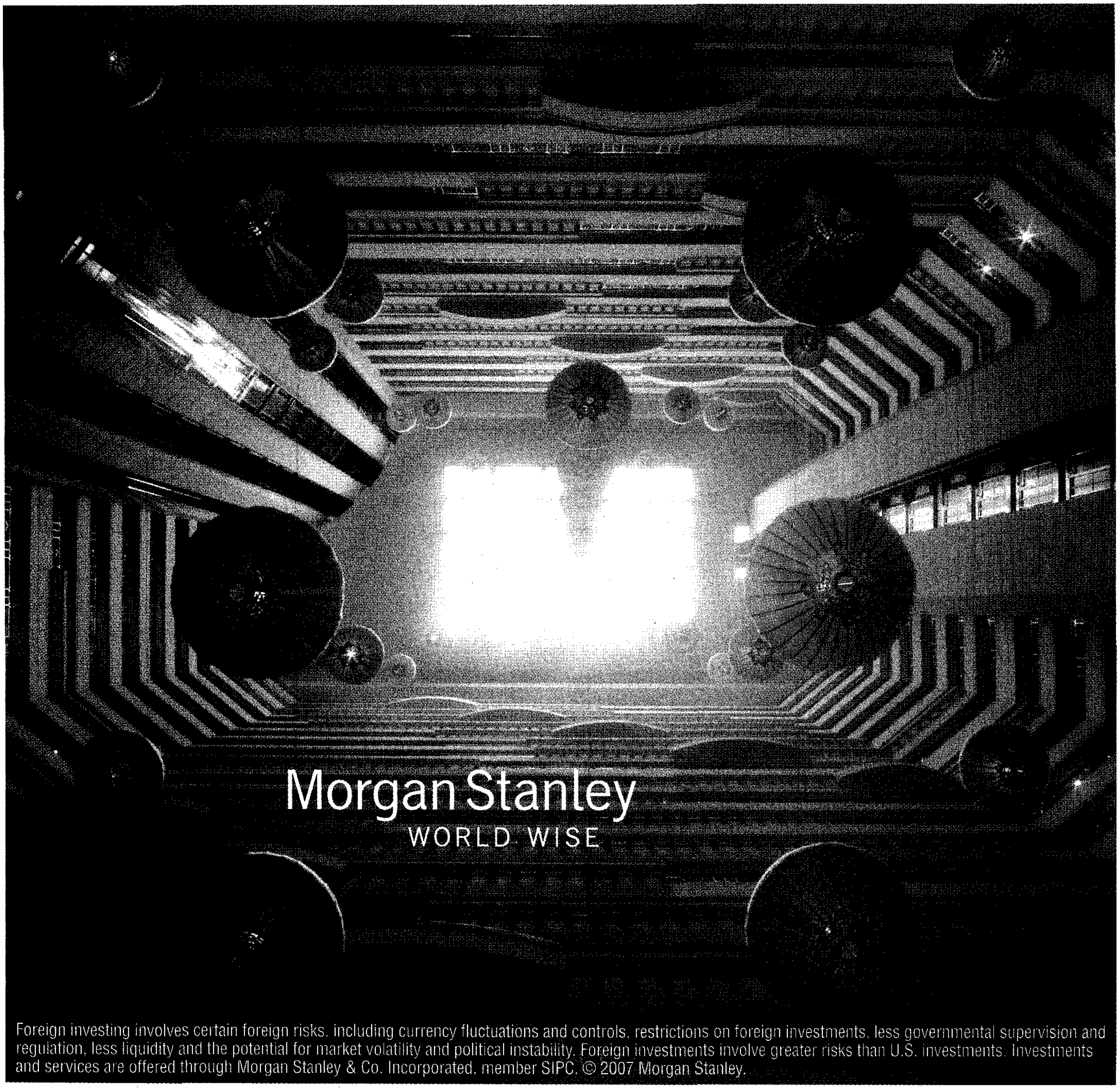

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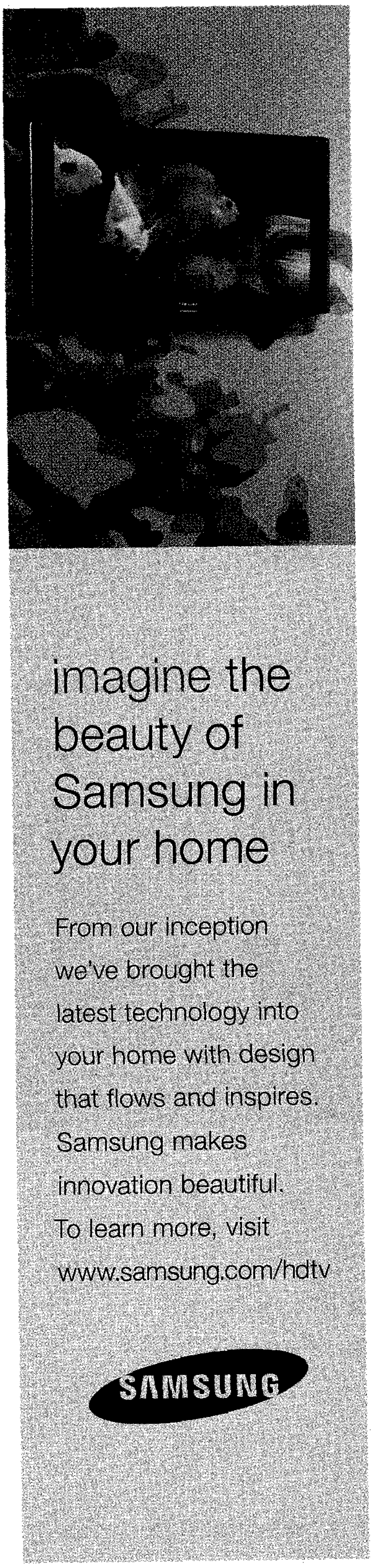

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Seymour M. Hersh ("The General's Report," p. 58) is the author of eight books, including "Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib."

Jeffrey Toobin (Comment, p. 35) has a new book, "The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court," coming out in the fall.

Rebecca Mead (The Talk of the Town, p. 38) is the author of "One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding," which was published last month.

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Judith Thurman ("French Blues," p. 49) is the author of "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette." A collection of her *New Yorker* essays, entitled "Cleopatra's Nose," is due out in October.

Louise Glück (Poem, p. 64) was the U.S. Poet Laureate for 2003-04. Her tenth book of poems, "Averno," is available in paperback.

David Owen ("The Anti-Gravity Men," p. 70) is a staff writer. His book "Sheetrock & Shellac" has just come out in paperback.

Helen Simpson (Fiction, p. 82) published her fourth short-story collection, "In the Driver's Seat," in May.

John Lanchester (Books, p. 88) is the author of three novels and a memoir, "Family Romance," which came out in February.

Alex Ross (Musical Events, p. 94) will publish "The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century" in October.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 96) is the magazine's television critic.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 98) is the author of, most recently, "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

George Packer writes about the plight of Iraqis seeking refuge in the United States in his new blog, Interesting Times. / Photographs of the engineering marvels of Arup and monuments by Zurab Tsereteli. / From the archives: *Seymour M. Hersh* on Abu Ghraib, *Tina Brown* on Princess Diana, *Janet Flanner* on Edith Piaf. / A slide show of *New Yorker* wedding covers. / The Film File: thousands of capsule reviews, going back to 1990. / *Junot Díaz* and *Edwidge Danticat* on the monthly fiction podcast. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events around the country.

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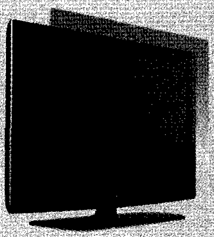

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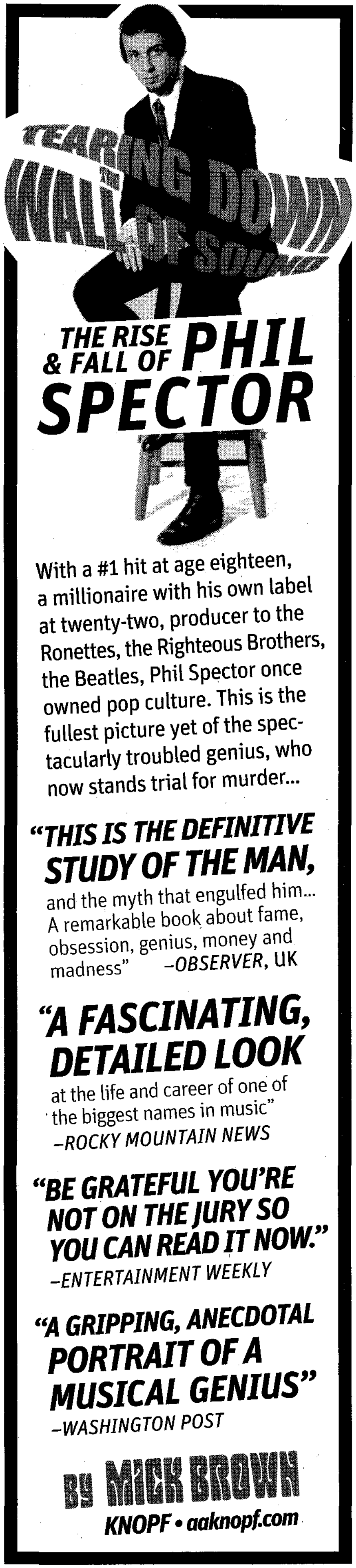

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BY MICK BROWN

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LITERARY INFLUENCES

Adam Gopnik's perceptive article on Abraham Lincoln's final words states that Secretary of State William Seward sent a letter to Lincoln suggesting changes to his first Inaugural Address ("Angels and Ages," May 28th). The letter contained a "vague, conventional reference to the 'guardian angel' of the nation." According to Gopnik, "Lincoln seized on that reference and turned it into one of his most memorable rhetorical inventions, the 'better angels of our nature,' which might yet keep the country from war." Even so, at least some of the credit for this rhetorical invention belongs to Shakespeare, who wrote in "Othello," Act V, Scene 2:

> GRATIANO: Poor Desdemon! I am glad
> thy father's dead . . .
> Did he live now,
> This sight would make him do a
> desperate turn,
> Yea, curse his better angel from his side,
> And fall to reprobance.

Herbert Cheyette
La Jolla, Calif.

Although I agree with Gopnik that Lincoln did not make explicit classical references in his speeches in the way that was common for Edward Everett, who spoke before Lincoln at Gettysburg, and many other nineteenth-century orators, it is hard to believe that there was not one very significant implicit classical influence in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Pericles' Funeral Oration, as related in Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War," expresses the modest role of the speaker and glorifies the noble deeds of the war dead by focussing on the state that nurtured them, the previous generations who made this state excel, and the particular form of government, the greatest in Hellas, for which they sacrificed their lives. He then turns to the living and urges them to model themselves on the heroic dead. Lincoln kept his speech shorter, but the similarities of theme are too apparent to believe that the Gettysburg Address was not inspired directly by Pericles' Funeral Oration.

Richard D. Weigel
Professor of History
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Ky.

MAKING MEMORIES

Alec Wilkinson recounts the Microsoft researcher Gordon Bell's effort to build a personal archive encompassing all the minutiae of his life, a practice dubbed "lifelogging" ("Remember This?" May 28th). Most of us do something similar, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on how infected we are by the natural impulse to hoard, which is often aided by advances like freely available, high-quality media on the Web or the ubiquity of cheap digital cameras and video cameras. But researchers' speculative notions of how to put this technology to use—such as automatic story generation from one's vacation photos—are underwhelming at best. The gain is not only trifling; it's destructive. Eliminating the "burden" of creating our own life stories would seem to remove perhaps the most important act of our moral and intellectual lives. But lifelogging can potentially challenge and enrich our understanding of everything from our own personal relationships to philosophical questions and political issues. Critical to the question of purpose is Bell's concern about the persistence of media formats. What good is an archive of digital files that can't be retrieved ten, twenty, or a hundred years from now? It might serve us better to instead consider lifelogging as a practice that affords us continuous opportunities to enrich our lives and minds, so that we're left in a better place even when the technology is removed.

Jonathan Hall
Bloomfield, N.J.

•

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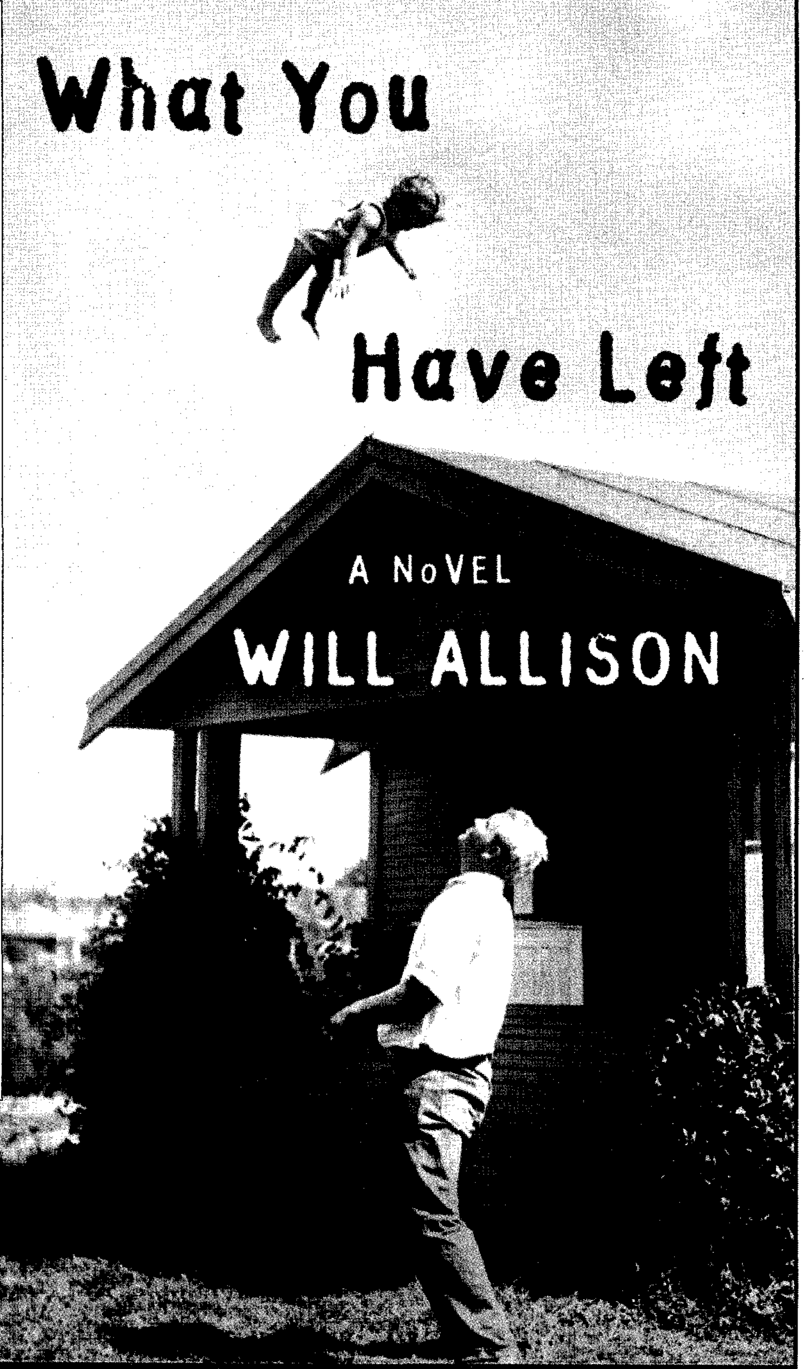
–*O, The Oprah Magazine*



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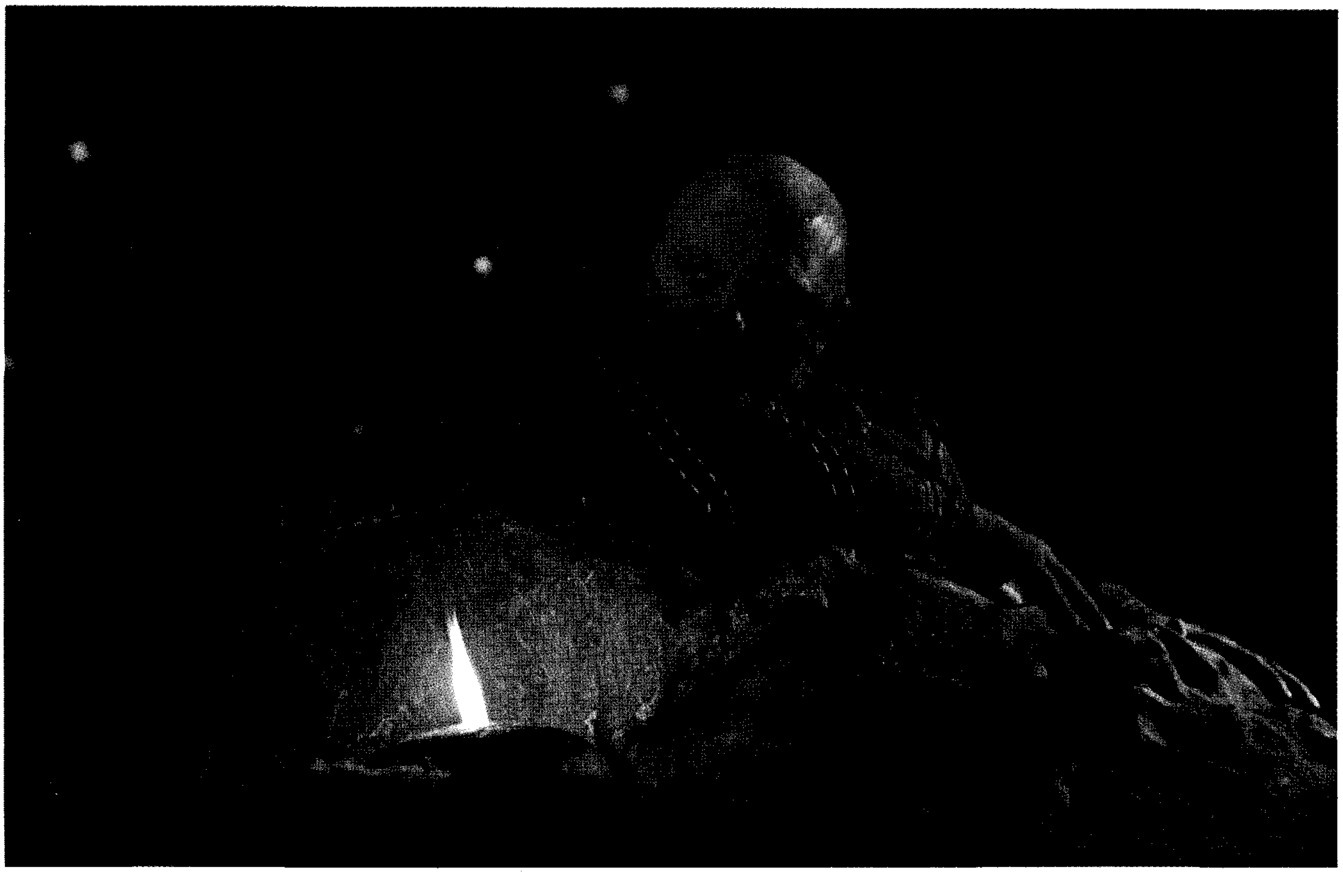


A performance from the Japan Society's ongoing "Noh-Now!" series. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
24	25	26	20	21	22	23

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
CATFIGHT

Margaret Colin and Harriet Harris star in the Roundabout's revival of "Old Acquaintance," at the American Airlines Theatre. In John Van Druten's drawing-room comedy, which débuted on Broadway in 1940, two longtime friends, both of whom have become successful writers, clash. (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE
FREEWHEELIN'

The former skateboarding prodigy Tommy Guerrero, who helped to revolutionize the sport by taking it out of skate parks and onto the streets, is also a talented guitarist, bassist, and producer, with a mostly instrumental, Beck-meets-Manu Chao approach to music. The San Francisco native has played New York City only once before, two years ago, but he has a pair of shows here this week, at Union Pool, in Brooklyn, and the Knitting Factory, in Manhattan. (See page 20.)

ART
SUMMER SCHOOL

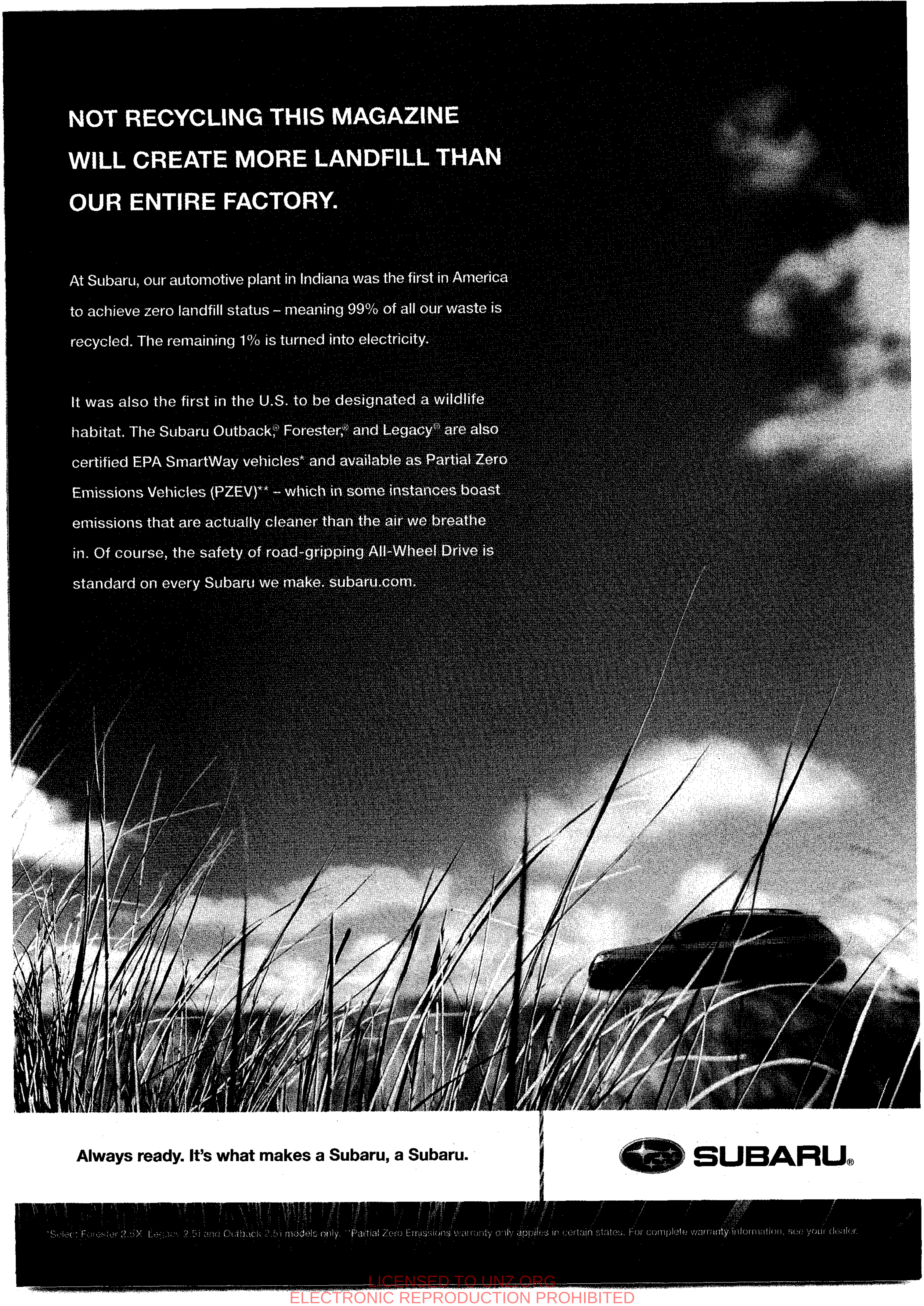
P.S. 1's summer shows are always exercises in sprightly intellectualism. Among this year's exhibitions are the sound-oriented "Organizing Chaos" and a survey of Peter Young's paintings from the sixties and seventies. Next week, in the courtyard, they'll be joined by "Liquid Sky," the selection of the annual Young Architects Program, designed by the Los Angeles firm Ball-Nogues. (See page 21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ROCK SOLID

Few venues for avant-garde music are as intimate as the Stone, John Zorn's tiny, stripped-down performance space in the East Village, which this week hosts two concerts by the composer-performers of Ne(x)tworks. (See page 26.)

MOVIES
EAST COMES WEST

The New York Asian Film Festival, a welcome annual roundup of Eastern cinema, unspools at IFC Center with Park Chanwook's candy-colored "I'm a Cyborg, but That's OK," Patrick Tam's family melodrama "After This Our Exile," and Soi Cheang's gangster thriller "Dog Bite Dog." (See page 30.)



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BEYOND GLORY
Roundabout Theatre Company presents the New York première of Stephen Lang's one-man show, based on Larry Smith's book about war heroes. Robert Falls directs. In previews. Opens June 21. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

ELVIS PEOPLE
Doug Grissom's play looks at the ways in which Elvis Presley has influenced American culture. In previews. Opens June 21. (New World Stages, Stage I, at 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

GONE MISSING
The Civilians present an updated version of their 2001 musical, based on interviews with New Yorkers about things they have lost. Directed by Steven Cosson, with music and lyrics by Michael Friedman. In previews. Opens June 24. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LAST YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
Waterwell premières this rock musical, drawn from Dr. King's speeches, writings, and interviews. Directed by Tom Ridgely. Previews begin June 21. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

NO END OF BLAME
The Potomac Theatre Project presents Howard Barker's play, about a political cartoonist struggling with censorship, in repertory with "Politics of Passion," a triptych of early works by Anthony Minghella. Previews begin June 23. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 800-838-3006.)

OLD ACQUAINTANCE
Margaret Colin and Harriet Harris star in a revival of John Van Druten's comedy from 1940. Michael Wilson directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Michael Greif directs this production, which begins the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season. Lauren Ambrose, Oscar Isaac, and Austin Pendleton star. In previews. Opens June 24. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

XANADU
Douglas Carter Beane wrote the book for this stage version of the movie from 1980, about a roller-skating Muse in Venice Beach. Kerry Butler stars. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

"THE ARGUMENT" / "DINNER PARTY"
Target Margin Theatre and the Kitchen present "The Argument," based on Aristotle's "Poetics," and "Dinner Party," adapted from Plato's "Symposium." David Herskovits directs. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

BEHIND THE LID
A new play written by the late Lee Nagrin and the puppeteer Basil Twist, about a woman in her seventies who travels through her dreams, featuring puppetry by Twist. (Silver Whale Gallery, 21 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
Alan Ayckbourn's "Intimate Exchanges," a series of sixteen variations on one premise, with a different play each performance; "Rabbit," written and directed by Nina Raine; and "Radio," by Al Smith, continue their runs. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

CRAZY MARY
It's rare that a play about insanity has this much trouble letting loose. Sigourney Weaver, in a performance so impersonal it comes across like a cold read, plays Lydia, a nearly broke Buffalo Wasp visiting a distant relative, Mary (Kristine Nielsen), a patient in a posh sanitarium who is sitting on what's left of the family fortune. In tow is Lydia's son, Skip (Michael Esper), a resentful Harvard junior who sees Mary as a kindred nonconformist and, scandalously, becomes her beau. The resulting love affair, which has overtones of real tenderness, is the only aspect of A. R. Gurney's script that doesn't feel entirely wooden. Jim Simpson directs. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through June 26.)

EURYDICE
Sarah Ruhl adapts the myth of Orpheus for this drama, in which Eurydice goes on a journey through the underworld to find her father. Les Waters directs. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

FALSETTOLAND
The National Asian American Theatre Company remounts this musical about Jewish angst. With music and lyrics by William Finn and a book by Finn and James Lapine. (Dimson Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 212-279-4200.)

FROM RIVERDALE TO RIVERHEAD
In Anastasia Traina's acid comedy of family dynamics, at Studio Dante, a mousy twenty-three-year-old downtown artist named Rosie (Bess Rous) gets trapped in a car with her three volatile Italian-American aunts from the Bronx. Crude, loudmouthed Stella (played with wicked timing by Sharon Angela) drives and stirs the pot, while tenderhearted Fannie (Catherine Curtin) labors to keep the peace and self-absorbed Louise (Angelica Torn) contemplates their grim destination: her son's prison. Under Nick Sandow's direction, the ensemble creates a startling picture of the sisters' ancient rivalries and unmet longings, sustaining a note of prickly tension under the laughs. A late, unconvincing plot twist asserts that the sisters' bite is worse than their bark, but it's that bark—painful, childish, and oh so familiar—that really persuades. (257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

HORIZON
Rinde Eckert's newest work is something of a theological soft-shoe dance—a busy interior monologue by a radical teacher of religious ethics, Reinhart Poole (played by Eckert), who is on the verge of losing his seminary post owing to unorthodoxy. The director, David Schweizer, uses a complex canvas of sound and motion to construct changing stage pictures, and the actors David Barlow and Howard Swain each take on a slew of voices, playing Poole's family, colleagues, and students. Poole is loosely based on the late Reinhold Niebuhr, but don't expect a Cliffs Notes guide. Although it's an allusive work, "Horizon" is less eggheady than it sounds; it's inventively layered, but its substance often feels a bit thin. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
Bells and stamping feet reverberate through the director Chay Yew's starkly affecting production for the National Asian American Theatre Company. As Federico García Lorca's widowed matriarch, Ching Valdes-Aran conveys the aristocratic pretensions, the slights endured and absorbed, that have calcified in her over the years, turning her into the jailer of her own daughters. Sequestered in mourning for eight years, the young women refuse to surrender their fantasies: they plan clandestine trysts, and break into flamenco when they spy a group of men working in the fields nearby. A lyrical madness underlies their rigid compliance, and the excellent cast accentuates the individuality of each daughter's secret rebellions. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, Nagelberg Theatre, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 212-279-4200. Through June 23.)

IN A DARK DARK HOUSE
MCC Theatre presents the world première of Neil LaBute's new play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

PASSING STRANGE
This finely crafted, ethnic-minded musical, by the musician and singer Stew, is a brilliant work about its

DVD NOTES
A CLASH OF SYMBOLS

The director Howard Hawks (1896-1977), the cinematic kin to his friend Ernest Hemingway, evoked with spare visual rhetoric the stern tests of valor that defined his romantic heroes. A spate of new DVD releases and reissues reveal how Hawks obsessively reworked his personal mythology of sex and power throughout his long career.

Hawks's gangster classic **"Scarface"** (Universal), from 1932, tells the harshly realistic yet deftly stylized Prohibition-era story of the rise and fall of Tony Camonte (Paul Muni), a gaudy Chicago hit man who exerts his will to power with breezy good cheer. His rage is reserved for keeping his eighteen-year-old sister (Ann Dvorak) from other men, including his sidekick, Guino (George Raft). Yet Camonte's most intimate relationship is with his meek, illiterate "secretary," Angelo (Vince Barnett): when Guino catches Tony clutching the barrel of Angelo's gun, the collective look of embarrassment suggests all that Hawks couldn't say.

The equally bilious **"Land of the Pharaohs"** (Warners), from 1955, depicts horrific violence inflicted in ancient Egypt in the name of a belief system. Pharaoh (Jack Hawkins) coerces an enslaved architect to build an impregnable tomb—a pyramid—to preserve his plundered riches for the afterlife. The colossal project's completion requires predatory exactions, but the Cypriot princess (Joan Collins) whom Pharaoh took first as a tribute offering and then as his second wife twists the court's depravity to achieve her own ends. Hawks's vision of sexualized tyranny rings fearsomely true, but the film, with its silly costumes and stilted dialogue (co-written by William Faulkner), was a flop.

Hawks returned in 1959 with the hearty Western **"Rio Bravo"** (Warners), starring John Wayne as John T. Chance, a sheriff holding a killer in jail as outlaws seek to free him. Chance, endowed with insight into everyone but himself, metes out tough love to his motley crew of deputies—a drunk (Dean Martin), a game-legged joker (Walter Brennan), and a callow gunslinger (the pop singer Ricky Nelson)—and to the hard-living young drifter (Angie Dickinson) who, despite his resistance, falls for him. Constrained by Hollywood taboos, Hawks brought his hothouse subtexts to life with comic visual symbols, as when the celibate Chance models a pair of lacy red bloomers.

In **"El Dorado"** (Paramount), a loose remake of "Rio Bravo," from 1967, Hawks explored more radical conflicts and confusions. Here, Robert Mitchum plays the sheriff, who shares a lover (Charlene Holt) with Wayne's freelance gunman; a young James Caan plays a poetry-spouting dandy who can't shoot straight. As Hawks's neurotic heroes endure debilitating physical and moral wounds and do battle under burlesque ruses, the jovial grandeur of the original gives way to antic hysteria.

—Richard Brody

◇ The Forevermark is used under license. Jewelry by Caressa.
asked me to dance *in the pouring rain*
said we were going to dinner and *took me to paris*
serenaded me in his tuxedo jacket *and nothing else*
never ceases to *surprise me*
A DIAMOND IS FOREVER
Three stones to *cherish your past*, *celebrate your present*, and *promise forever*.

The JVC Jazz Festival brings the pianist Vijay Iyer and the saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa to the Rubin Museum of Art.

FRANK STOCKTON

hero's migration beyond the tenets of "blackness" and toward selfhood. Stew, Heidi Rodewald (who co-wrote the music), and the exceptionally gifted director, Annie Dorsen, have created a work of such singularity that it prompts comparisons less to traditional theatre than to the eccentric iconoclasm of the producer Prince Paul, who ushered in the sound of the New Negro. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/11 & 18/07.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL
In St. John Hankin's 1905 play, which is receiving its New York première, Eustace (Roderick Hill) is a self-described wastrel and ne'er-do-well who returns to his family in Gloucestershire after five years of international wandering. But he still has powerful cards to play when his father (Richard Kline), a wealthy industrialist with political ambitions, threatens to disown him. Finely drawn arguments on economics, psychology, and social Darwinism enhance the family drama. The handsome, witty production was directed by Jonathan Bank. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

10 MILLION MILES
Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new musical with music and lyrics by Patty Griffin. (Reviewed in this issue.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Lonny Price directs Rebecca Lenkiewicz's play "The Night Season," about a film star who ends up in the home of three feisty sisters while working in Ireland. With Katherine Helmond and Michael O'Keefe. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Eric Hill directs "The Glass Menagerie," Tennessee Williams's classic play from 1944, at the Unicorn. On the Main Stage, Terrence McNally's Tony-winning play from 1995, "Love! Valour! Compassion!," begins previews June 19 and opens June 22. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
On the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel, "Richard III," directed by Terrence O'Brien, plays in repertory with "As You Like It," directed by Kurt Rhoads, which begins previews June 20. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
B. D. Wong stars in "Herringbone," a one-man musical about a child vaudeville star, through June 24. For a full schedule, visit www.wtfestival.org. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BRIG:** Living Theatre, 19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **FROST/NIXON:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GASLIGHT:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **110 IN THE SHADE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. **INHERIT THE WIND:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **LOVEMUSIK:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 24. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **RADIO GOLF:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TALK RADIO:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

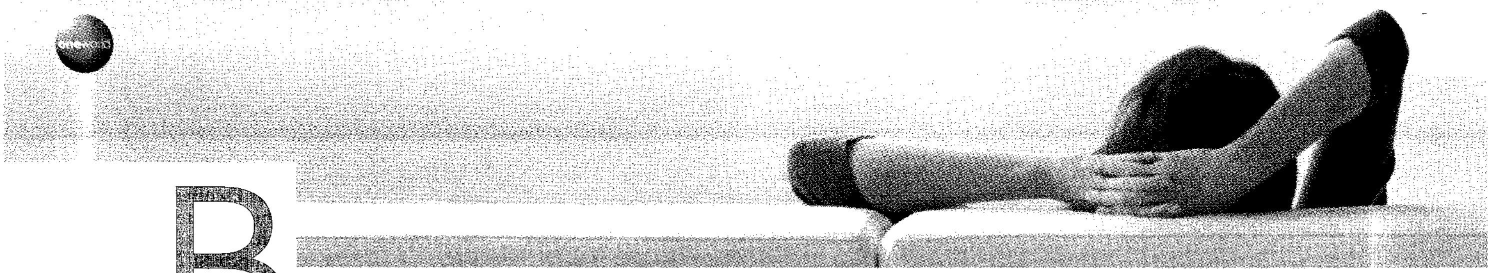
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 19-20: The **Fab Faux,** a Beatles cover band featuring Will Lee, of the "Late Show with David Letterman," and Jimmy Vivino, of "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." A fifth vocalist helps with the complicated studio arrangements of the Beatles' later output. June 23: **Panda Bear** takes time off from his regular band, Animal Collective. June 26: Tom Morello is best known for his incendiary guitar playing with the bands Audioslave and Rage Against the Machine, but he has recently assumed a new identity. In the guise of the **Nightwatchman,** the fiercely liberal Los Angeleno performs folkish agitprop designed to inspire activism and spark protest aimed squarely at the current occupant of the White House.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 21: The thorny English troubadour **Richard Thompson** makes a rare visit with a full band in tow. The occasion is the release of his bitterly sharp new album, "Sweet Warrior." The local gospel-tinged ensemble **Ollabelle** opens. June 22: **Ralph Stanley** and his **Clinch Mountain Boys.** Like a bootlegger, the banjo picker Stanley has roamed the small towns in the mountains of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Instead of dropping off moonshine, though, he's gathered musicians and cooked up top-shelf bluegrass. With **James Reams & The Barnstormers,** a group that has similar musical inclinations but hails from somewhere slightly closer—Park Slope (although Reams is originally from southeastern Kentucky).

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 22: **Dave Attell,** from Comedy Central, hosts an evening of standup with **John Mulaney, Joe DeRosa, Amy Schumer, Kurt Metzger, Ted Alexandro,** and others. June 24: Three acts from Canada. **Sloan,** a quartet originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia, has a few things that other indie-rock darlings lack. First, longevity—the band has been around for close to two decades. Second, hits (albeit at home). The four close friends, who frequently swap instruments and rotate songwriting duties, are clearly having a good time turning out power pop, which they do at length on their eighth studio release, "Never Hear the End of It." **Apostle of Hustle** is the Broken Social Scene lead guitarist Andrew Whiteman's ostensible vehicle for exploring music from below the forty-ninth parallel—namely, that of Cuba. (A visit there a few years ago reportedly inspired him to form the group.) The **Duhks,** five young tattooed musicians from Winnipeg, play soulful country music.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 20: **Asia,** the early-eighties supergroup, brought together former members of Yes, King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and the Buggles (of "Video Killed the Radio Star" fame). Despite the band's prog-rock pedigree, Asia opted for lushly produced arena rock (as opposed to filigree-laden suites and long movements) and saw a clutch of singles reach the top of the pop charts. Acrimony and attrition led to the departure of most of its original members within a few years, but the founding foursome has re-formed for a victory lap.



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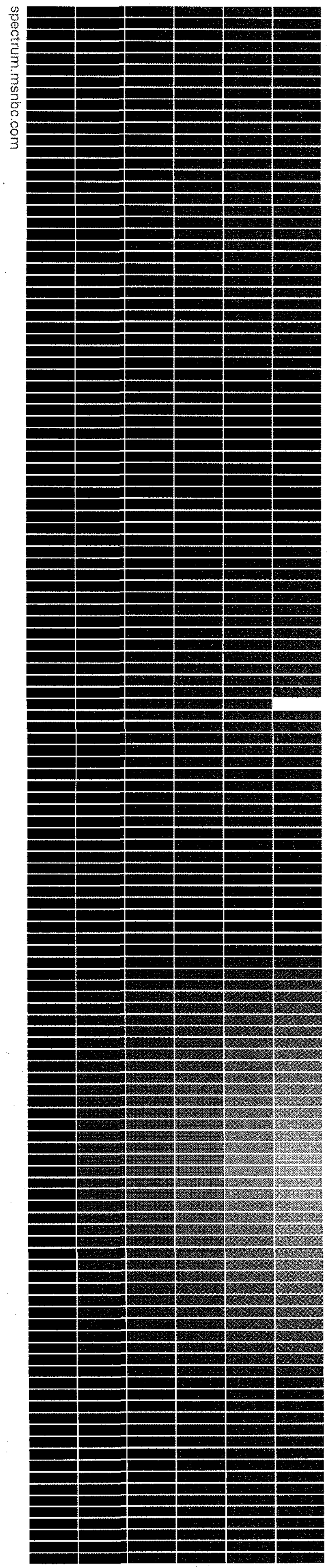


JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 25: **Mudville,** featuring the smoldering vocalist Marilyn Carino and the producer, bassist, and multi-instrumentalist Ben Rubin, delivers thick beats and movie-matinée organ playing. On June 25, they celebrate the release of their new CD, "Iris Nova," in the company of the guitarist **Jim Campilongo** and other guests from the new album.

JONES BEACH THEATRE
Wantagh, N.Y. (212-307-7171)—June 22: **Chicago** and **America,** two storied lite-rock groups from the seventies, remain unthreatened by the trends of today. Chicago began as a progressive jazz-rock collective, but it hit pay dirt with syrupy AM-radio classics like "Saturday in the Park" and "Wishing You Were Here." America, meanwhile, plays easy-on-the-ears music that makes James Taylor sound like Marilyn Manson.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—June 23: As a teen-ager in San Francisco, in the early eighties, **Tommy Guerrero** helped to revolutionize the sport of skateboarding by leaving the skate parks and riding in public, non-skateboard settings, such as streets, schoolyards, and parking lots. In 1984, as an amateur, he pulled off a surprise victory in the first street-skating competition, in Golden Gate Park. He went pro soon thereafter, joined the famed Powell Peralta skate team, and eventually started his own skateboard company. Throughout his life, he has also played music, mostly bass and guitar. His lo-fi, funky songs reflect the skittish motion he's become accustomed to, jumping from genre to genre, but they are unified by a cool West Coast style. His latest album is "From the Soil to the Soul."

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—June 20: **Vic Thrill & The Saturn Missile** are an eccentric local act that eludes categorization with giddy dexterity. Their psychedelic songs are rife with jittery rhythms and strange electronic instrumentation. June 25: **Apostle of Hustle** (see Central Park SummerStage).

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
June 20: In John Sayles's forthcoming film "Honeydripper," Danny Glover plays the down-at-the-heels owner of an Alabama juke joint, circa 1950. The music is courtesy of a solid lineup of blues players who are touring this summer as the **Honeydripper All-Star Band.** (World Financial Center Plaza.) June 26: **Martha Wainwright, Chris Thile, Ari Hest, Jim Campilongo,** and other singer-songwriters who frequent the Living Room, a repository of up-and-coming acoustic talent on the Lower East Side, gather for a show on the World Financial Center Plaza. (For more information about this free downtown festival, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

UNION POOL
484 Union Ave., at Meeker Ave., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-609-0484)—June 22: **Tommy Guerrero** (see the Knitting Factory).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 23: **Sarah Partridge** played a teen-age gamine in "Risky Business" in 1983, but even a cursory listen to her music will assure you that the now mature Partridge has transformed herself into an assured singer of hearty standards. This run is in celebration of a new album, "You Are There: Songs for My Father."

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 20-24: **Lee Konitz,** who turns eighty later this year and who is playing at the peak of his creative life, is an adherent of pure improvisation; clichés, well-worn licks, and stock phrases are just not options for him. The alto saxophonist leads a quartet featuring the neo-bop guitarist **Peter Bernstein.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 19-20: The great modern pianist **McCoy Tyner** fleshes out his trio with an unlikely partner, the harmonica virtuoso **Toots Thielemans.** The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** sits in for the remainder of the run, through June 24.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 19-24: The saxophonist **Wayne Escoffery's** band **Veneration** is powered by the magisterial swing of the drummer **Lewis Nash,** with additional support from two guest trumpeters: **Nicholas Payton** (June 19-21) and **Jeremy Pelt** (June 22-24).

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 20-24: The **Yellowjackets,** the grand old men of smooth jazz. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 20-23: The **Caribbean Jazz Project,** which is led by the vibraphonist **Dave Samuels,** is joined by the Brazilian guitarist **Romero Lubambo.** June 26: The JVC Jazz Festival (see below) brings in **Lionel Loueke,** a Beninese guitar sensation who uses his instrument and his voice to produce idiosyncratic music that's provocatively out of step with that of his six-string brethren.

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL
Only two shows this year flaunt outright jazz stars—the bands of the saxophonists **Branford Marsalis** and **Joshua Redman,** at Town Hall (June 20), and the trio of the pianist **Keith Jarrett,** the drummer **Jack DeJohnette,** and the bassist **Gary Peacock,** at Carnegie Hall (June 21)—but there are plenty of other promising events. Traditionalists should welcome the **Preservation Hall Jazz Band's** show at Town Hall (June 19) and all-star tributes to **Marian McPartland** (also on June 19) and the late **Ruby Braff** (June 20), at Kaye Playhouse. Birthday celebrations for **Lee Konitz** (June 25, at Zankel Hall) and **Ron Carter** (June 27, at Carnegie Hall) lean toward mainstream modernism. A duet on June 22 at the Rubin Museum of Art with the multiculturally inclined pianist **Vijay Iyer** and his frequent collaborator the saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** limns the outer limits of the festival's jazz offerings. Falling outside the strict jazz purview are performances by **Cesária Évora, Eartha Kitt, India.Arie, Patti LaBelle, Béla Fleck & The Flecktones,** and the **Del McCoury Band.** (For a complete schedule, visit www.festivalproductions.net. Through June 30.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 19-24: The soulful saxophonist **Wess (Warmdaddy) Anderson,** still best known for his work with Wynton Marsalis, takes charge with his own quartet, featuring the pianist **Aaron Diehl,** the bassist **Kengo Nakamura,** and the drummer **Jaz Sawyer.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), is at the Costume Institute through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Neo Rauch at the Met: Para"** presents new paintings by the Leipzig-based artist. Through Oct. 14. ♦ **"Impressionist and Early Modern Paintings: The Clark Brothers Collect."** Sibling rivalry was played out in galleries, studios, auction houses, and museums for Robert Sterling Clark (1877-1956), the founder of the Williamstown, Massachusetts, art institute that bears his name, and Stephen Carlton Clark (1882-1960), a noted trustee of and donor to the Met. This exhibit gathers the outstanding Cézannes, Seurats, Homers, Sargents, Picassos, and other works that the brothers competed for and collected. Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Frank Stella on the Roof."** Through Oct. 28. ♦ **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** presents the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ **"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** Through July 8. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' at 100."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Barry Frydlender: Place and Time."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The telescoping spiral of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim rotunda is in the midst of a summerlong restoration, so it's a timely moment to consider how geometry sculpts the void. **"The Shapes of Space"** culls works from the permanent collection and will evolve over the summer, moving upward as the renovation progresses. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: Restoring a Masterpiece."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era."** The summer of 1967 looks like an oasis of bliss in this show, which mostly ignores the tumult of the late sixties and early seventies and instead focusses on how groovy it all looked—from the right vantage point. Works by Lynda Benglis, Richard Hamilton, Robert Indiana, and Yayoi Kusama point up the idea that even so-called "high" art joined the psychedelic parade. (Donald Judd obviously wouldn't have fit the bill.) But art is generally overshadowed here by posters, magazines, and other pop ephemera. You can also witness the seeds of the youth and celebrity cultures taking over, as the exhibition documents the scene at the London night club UFO and at the Human Be-In, in San Francisco, in January, 1967. The show also presents Jimi Hendrix's only known watercolor. Through Sept. 16. ♦ **"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the late, great aesthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by artists he championed, including Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ The newly opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Biographical Landscape: The Photography of Stephen Shore, 1969-79."** Through Sept. 9. ♦ **"Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African-American Portraits."** Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend."** Through Sept. 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War."** Through Aug. 12. ♦ **"The *Jewish Daily Forward:* Embracing an Immigrant Community."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—The **"182nd Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Art."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Van Gogh and Expressionism."** Through July 2. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"The World of Asher B. Durand: The Artist in Antebellum New York."** Through Sept. 30. ♦ **"A New Light on Tiffany: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Girls."** Through July 22. ♦ **"New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The score for John Cage's "4'33"" (1952), which instructs the performer to make no intentional sound, functions as a touchstone for **"Organizing Chaos,"** a sound-art show in which about half the works are mute. Luke Fowler's video "Pilgrimage from Scatter Points" (2006) investigates the Scratch Orchestra, the British composer Cornelius Cardew's experimental-music project from the late sixties and early seventies; Christian Marclay's cacophonous "Guitar Drag" (2000) features footage of a plugged-in electric guitar bouncing wildly along the pavement. Perhaps it's only appropriate that noise from adjacent installations makes it hard to hear the Robert Smithson interview in Jane Crawford and Robert Fiore's documentary film "Rundown." But he's talking about entropy, and that idea of a formula for disorder knits the show's works together. With pieces by Bruce Nauman, Rivane Neuenschwander, and Stephen Vitiello, among others. Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Peter Young: 1963-1977."** Through Sept. 24. ♦ **"Linder."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Philosophy of Time Travel,"** a collaborative installation by Edgar Arceneaux, Vincent Galen Johnson, Olga Koumoundouros, Rodney McMillian, and Matthew Sloly. Through July 1. ♦ **"Henry Taylor: Sis and Bra."** Through July 1. ♦ **"Silhouette: Collection in Context."** Through July 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

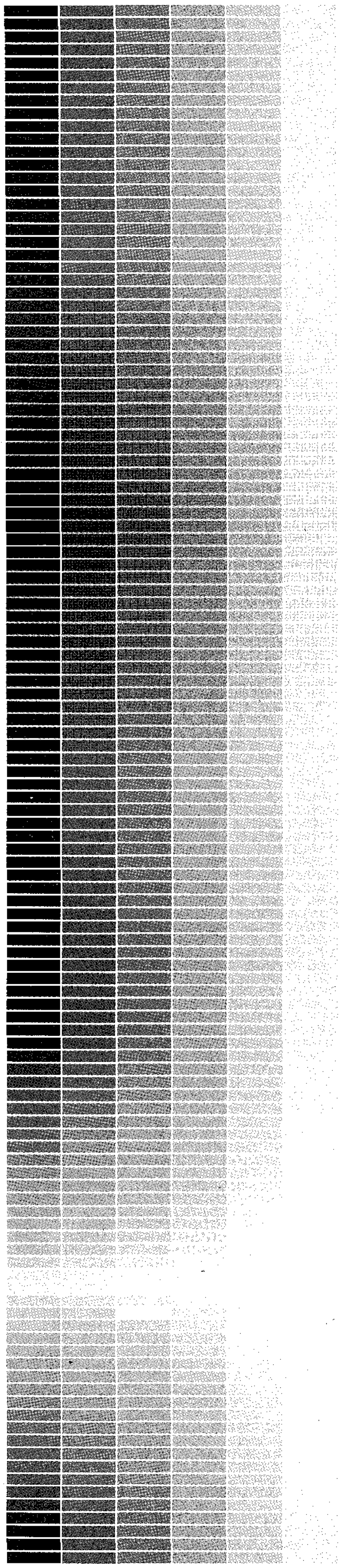
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

DONNA FERRATO
Ferrato is known for the awful, intimate images of domestic abuse that she published in her 1991 book, "Living with the Enemy." One of those pictures, of a man slapping his wife, is included here, with a group of photographs from the nineteen-seventies and eighties that explore intimacy and abuse of another sort: encounters, both public and private, among the sexual adventurers known as swingers. A woman pushes her white pump into a man's face; he sucks on the stiletto heel. The couple involved in the slap is shown in a harrowing series of color shots that look like the nightmare dissolution sequence of a period sexploitation movie. The work tilts more toward Russ Meyer than toward Brassaï, but it's still powerful stuff. Through June 29. (Higher Pictures, 764 Madison Ave., at 65th St. 212-249-6100.)

Short List

DAMIÁN ORTEGA: Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Fifth Ave. at 60th St. For more information, see www.publicartfund.org. Through Oct. 28. **PAUL PFEIFFER:** The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673. Through June 22. **"A CENTURY AND A HALF IN THE ART BUSINESS":** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767. Through June 23. **"CONCEPTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY 1964-1989":** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through June 23. **"PICASSO, BRAQUE, AND EARLY FILM IN CUBISM":** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through June 23.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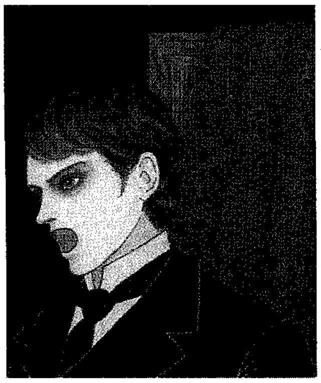


AKIKO KATO

Lowell Liebermann is an epicure among American composers, savoring glittery chords, gossamer lines, and velvety textures that more self-consciously intellectual colleagues might be scared to put on paper. He's well equipped to take on Oscar Wilde, and his 1996 opera, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," luxuriates in a suitably eclectic aesthetic language, ranging from the late-Romantic regret of the elder Richard Strauss to the minimalist pizzazz of the young Philip Glass. Center City Opera Theatre, in Philadelphia, recently gave the première of his chamber-orchestra version of "Dorian Gray," which allows the voices to be heard clearly amid the instrumental bacchanalia. Hardworking singers, led by the tenor Jorge Garza, brought to life Wilde's tale of eternal youth and smoldering sin; Andrew Kurtz conducted an often dulcet-toned orchestra. Liebermann's piece is a superior example of the book-club operas that have thrived on American stages in recent years. With one or two cuts in the slightly overlong first act, it might even become a durable classic.

—*Alex Ross*

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ART & LANGUAGE, STEPHANIE BROOKS, HELEN MIRRA, IAN WILSON
Two word-obsessed post-post-minimalists—Brooks and Mirra—are juxtaposed with Wilson and the Art & Language collective, veterans of Conceptualist-era poetics. All are interested in language as a rigorous code of repetition and difference, but the women dare to provide a stronger dose of sensuality. Brooks, for example, presents "My Idealized Library of Feminism"—a suite of ten polished, blank, book-size panels of cherrywood—while Mirra's pricked-paper drawings quote the index of some evocative but unidentified volume ("Blunders, 18; irreparable, so easy to commit, 114"). Wilson contributes two sets of artist's books, each page of which reads "Perfect," while Art & Language marks the history of such verbal-visual practice with two grand chart drawings from the early seventies. Through June 23. (Peter Blum, 526 W. 29th St. 212-244-6055.)

PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS
The Swiss collaborative team, which has shown work in many mediums, used photography to document eighty-two ephemeral constructions they made between 1984 and 1987. Using everyday objects ranging in size from a potato to a wine bottle to a bicycle, they made temporary sculptures—Dada-esque assemblages that involved wildly disparate elements in unlikely balance. The results are elegant, funky, engaging, and charmingly modest. Work on this series led Fischli and Weiss to create the brilliant sequence of interconnected, Rube Goldbergian contraptions that they filmed in 1987 for "The Way Things Go." Another film, "Making Things Go," débuting here, records the slapstick trial and error that went into that comic masterpiece. Through June 30. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.)

DIDIER MASSARD
The Paris-based photographer is an illusionist, conjuring (i.e., constructing in his studio) imaginary landscapes that are at once meticulously realistic and magical, even otherworldly. A magnificent rhinoceros stalks through a fogbound clearing and a jewel-like jellyfish floats through the rays of light that filter into an underwater coral garden; people would spoil these fantasy lands. Other sites—a forbidding marsh, a misty glacier, a grotto framing a black-pearl moon—are more purely fanciful, like sets for operas or classic Disney cartoons. Although Massard casts a strange and lovely spell, once he's pulled off an illusion the delight can dissipate fast. Through June 23. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

"IN DEFENSE OF ARDOR"
Another chapter in the backlash against irony—or, as the press release states, irony narrowly defined as "a kind of ideological malaise, a willful displacing of affect in return for absolute neutrality and arrogant negativity." The ardent artists here include neo-neo-expressionist painters like Jonathan Meese, Jutta Koether, and Dana Frankfort; Nathalie Djurberg, whose Claymation video features a crying, alienated protagonist; and Johanna Billing, whose video of youth gathered for no ostensible reason is titled "Project for a Revolution." In another context, these artists might appear as capital ironists. Here, caught in the web of the curators Becky Smith and João Ribas's poetic theorizing (this is the third in a series of exhibitions titled "The Mallarmé Propositions"), they're definitely defying malaise and arrogant negativity. Through June 30. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959.)

Short List

ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS: Connelly, 625 W. 27th St. 212-337-9563. Through June 30. **THOMAS FLECHTNER:** Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889. Through Aug. 17. **WAYNE GONZALES:** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through June 29. **ANDREAS GURSKY:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St.; 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through June 30. **RALPH LEMON:** The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Through June 23. **MR.:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through June 23. **ROBIN RHODE:** Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St.; 526 W. 24th St.; 534 W. 24th St. 212-627-8000. Through June 23. **HAIM STEINBACH:** Sonnabend, 536 W. 22nd St. 212-627-1018. Through June 30. **FRANK STELLA:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474. Through July 6. **ZOE STRAUSS:** Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930. Through June 23. **JULIANNE SWARTZ:** Bienvenu, 529 W. 20th St. 212-206-7990. Through July 6. **RICHARD TUTTLE:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 30. **"CONCRETE WORKS":** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through July 27.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

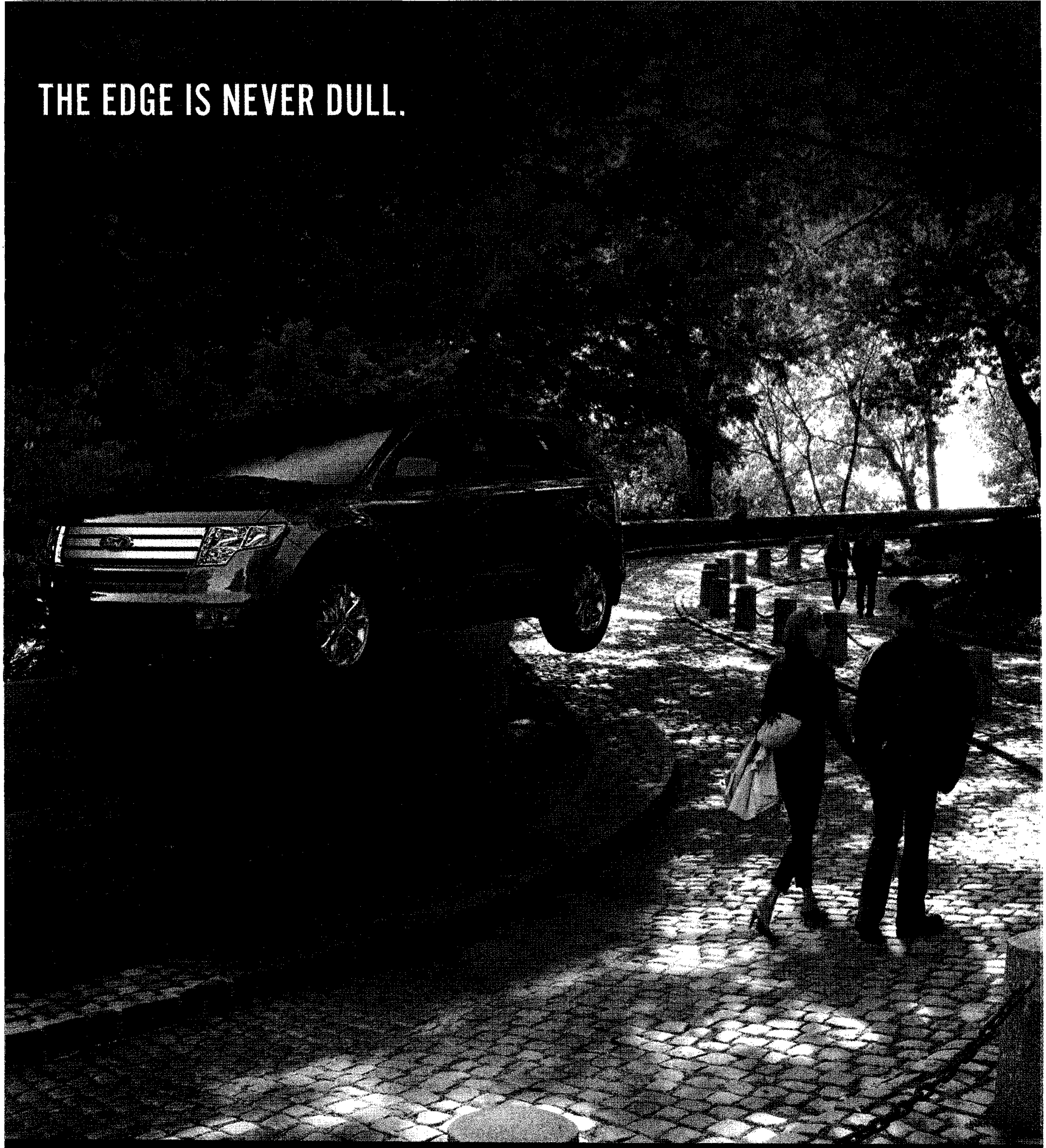
"PROJECT: RENDITION"
While not quite extraordinary, this show, by JC2—a.k.a. Joy Episalla, Joy Garnett, Carrie Moyer, and Carrie Yamaoka—makes nice use of a famous 1630 sermon by John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It is from this document that Presidential speechwriters lifted the phrase "a city upon a hill." JC2 prints an excerpt of the text on a giveaway poster, in ink that shows up only in black light: "The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken . . . we shall be made a story and a by-word throughout the world." An interactive sculpture is more heavy-handed—a pentagonal box in mirrored glass, with a soundtrack of snippets of jingoistic sci-fi. Through June 25. (Momenta, 359 Bedford Ave. 718-218-8058.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
This is a week of farewells. On Friday, at the State Theatre, the forty-eight-year-old Kyra Nichols will retire from the company, where she has spent the past thirty-three years (nine of them under the tutelage of George Balanchine), with a program comprising three of her most luminous roles, in "Serenade," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,'" and "Vienna Waltzes" (all by Balanchine). June 20 is the last opportunity to see Christopher Wheeldon's eerily gripping new ballet, "The Nightingale and the Rose." In what is perhaps an attempt to raise our spirits, the company will close the week, and the spring season, with two performances of Balanchine's shimmering "Jewels." ♦ June 20 at 7:30: "Jeu de Cartes," "The Nightingale and the Rose," and "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze.'" ♦ June 21 and June 23 at 8 and June 24 at 3: "Jewels." ♦ June 22 at 8 ("Kyra Nichols Farewell"): "Serenade," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,'" and "Der Rosenkavalier," from "Vienna Waltzes." ♦ June 23 at 2: "Raymonda Variations," "Dybbuk Variations," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." (Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
In the second major sendoff of the week (see N.Y.C.B., above), the beautiful and poignant Alessandra Ferri—endowed with amazingly arched feet, a marvellously pliant frame, and a fiery sense of drama—will take her final bow with A.B.T. on Saturday evening, after a performance of Kenneth MacMillan's "Romeo and Juliet." Dancing alongside her will be the guest artist Roberto Bolle, a thirty-two-year-old star at La Scala Ballet, in Milan. ♦ June 19 and June 21-22 at 8 and June 20 and June 23 at 2 and 8: "Romeo and Juliet." ♦ June 25-26 at 8: "Swan Lake." (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. Through July 7.)

"INVENTION: MERCE CUNNINGHAM & COLLABORATORS"
One of Cunningham's more radical practices has been to keep his choreography apart from his collaborators' sets and music until the first performance, when serendipitous correspondences begin to emerge. This landmark exhibit at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, opening June 19, is more planned than that, but the effect is similar: six decades' worth of backdrops and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and



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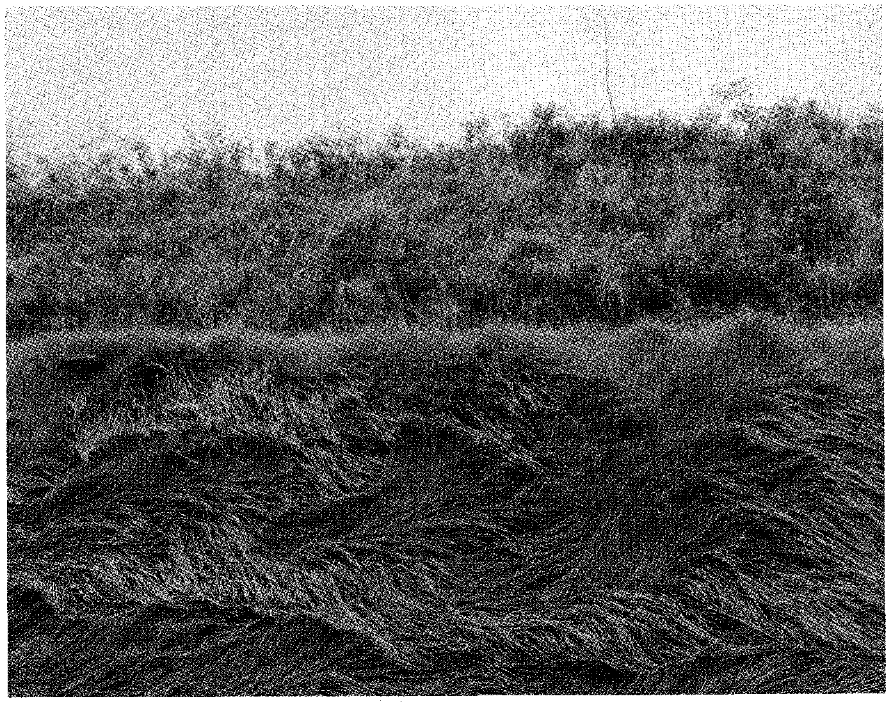
others, side by side with John Cage scores, chance-procedure charts, photographs, and performance footage. A new dance created by Cunningham will be performed on opening day at noon and again once a month until the exhibit closes. (40 Lincoln Center Plaza. 212-870-1630. Through Oct. 13.)

SAVION GLOVER
"Invitations to a Dancer," the tap virtuoso's four-week engagement at the Joyce this summer, features something he calls Bare Soundz, which is kind of a company and kind of a concept. Glover and two other hoofers provide the show's only aural component, accompanying not only themselves but a handful of ballet and jazz dancers, including the young choreographer Suzana Stankovic and the Broadway and music-video veteran Sheila Barker. Glover's collaborators are new, but his message is the same: tap dance is music. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 19 at 8, June 20 at 2 and 7:30, June 21-22 at 8, and June 23 at 2 and 8. Through July 14.)

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET
The well-heeled West Side troupe stages Ohad Naharin's greatest-hits collection, "Decadance." (547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. June 19-23 at 8 and June 24 at 7. Through July 1.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The beloved Spanish troupe, starring Soledad Barrio, shows flamenco at its intimate, traditional best. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. June 20-22 at 8, June 23 at 2 and 8, and June 24 at 1:30. Through July 29.)



Recent photographs by Thomas Flechtner, including "Site 16," are at Boesky.

"US"
In Alexandra Beller's new solo show, directed by Kristin Marting, the former Bill T. Jones standout dresses herself in the American flag, uses it as a jump rope, breast-feeds it. A sound score assaults her with conservative rhetoric, circa 2004, and she enlists the audience in pointing out contradictions in Leviticus. Beller's powerful physicality conveys distress but also a rich sensuality, as she partners a blow-up doll and then a mop. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave. 212-352-3101. June 21-23 at 8:30 and June 24 at 4 and 8:30.)

HELL'S KITCHEN DANCE
Mikhail Baryshnikov's newest project makes its début at its New York home, the Baryshnikov Arts Center. The troupe's chief draw, of course, is its star, still extraordinary as he nears sixty, his virtuosity less expansive and more subtly assured. Donna Uchizono's trio "Leap to Tall" presents Baryshnikov as a visionary, flanked by two women. With a score interrupted by buzz saws and jackhammers, the piece could be a construction-site "Apollo." Aszure Barton's "Come In" sets the living legend among the full ensemble, bringing out more directly the troupe's constant subtext of age compared with youth. (450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200. June 22 at 8, June 23 at 2 and 8, and June 24 at 3.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
Turning seventy-five this year, the Berkshire dance festival goes all out. The Royal Danish Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater II send representatives, and four other European and Brazilian troupes make débuts. The freelance virtuoso Rasta Thomas honors the Pillow's founder, Ted Shawn, with a new all-male troupe called the Bad Boys of Dance, and the Pillow favorites Mark Morris and Paul Taylor come bearing gifts. The great Georgian ballerina Nina Ananiashvili brings her own company, the State Ballet of Georgia, to the festival June 20-24, on its first American tour. The eclectic program includes Balanchine's "Mozartiana," Trey McIntyre's 1996 work "Second Before the Ground," and the Grand Divertissement from "Don Quixote," which will be danced by Ananiashvili herself. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

"MET IN THE PARKS"
Peter Gelb's "new Met" may prize innovation, but it's not likely that he'll tamper much with this beloved summer series, an annual gift to the city for four decades. **"La Bohème"** features Hei-Kyung Hong, an admired Met regular, as Mimì, along with Mary Dunleavy, Roberto Aronica, and Dwayne Croft; Gareth Morrell conducts. (Cunningham Park, Queens. June 20 at 8. ♦ Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick, N.J. June 23 at 8.) ♦ Complementing the Puccini is Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Maurizio Benini, an effective leader of early-nineteenth-century fare, conducting a cast that features Katie Van Kooten, Kate Lindsey, David Pomeroy, Hung Yun, and the redoubtable James Morris (in the grand role of Méphistophélès). (Brookdale Park, Montclair, N.J. June 22 at 8.) (These are the final performances. No tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA: "FALSTAFF"
Anthony Amato's storied opera company, a feisty mixture of professionals and amateurs, performs Verdi's big-boned comedy in its tiny, old-time venue on the Lower East Side. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. June 22-23 at 7:30 and June 24 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel has closed every Philharmonic season of his tenure but one with a Mahler symphony; this time it's No. 7, long regarded as a "composer's piece" because of its intricate structure and notable lack of heart-on-sleeve emotion. (The two "Nachtmusik" movements, however, offer a surfeit of tonal beauty.) Sensualists will be consoled by the presence of the soprano Deborah Voigt, who will bring her steely yet radiant voice to a selection of songs by Richard Strauss (including the deathless "Morgen"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. June 20-21 at 7:30 and June 22-23 at 8.)

BROOKLYN YOUTH CHORUS: "SOUNDSCAPES"
The best children's choirs—like the Vienna Boys' Choir—tend to be conservators of tradition, but Dianne Berkun's Grammy-winning ensemble (praised by no less than John Adams, whose 9/11 elegy, "On the Transmigration of Souls," they premièred with the New York Philharmonic) embraces the new. Their fifteenth-anniversary concert features five world premières, including pieces by such composers as Paul Moravec ("Creation Hymn"), David Lang, and Nico Muhly. (Kumble Theatre, Brooklyn Campus, Long Island University, 1 University Plaza. 718-488-1624. June 22 at 7:30 and June 23 at 2 and 7:30.)

NAUMBURG ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS
The Naumburg family, whose eponymous Band Shell in Central Park is the site for a series of free concerts every summer, begins their new season on an exotic note by presenting the Chinese flautist Chen Tao and his ensemble Melody of Dragon, who will offer a program of traditional Chinese music as well as a work by Tan Dun ("The Trace of Bamboo"). (Concert Ground, mid-Park south of 72nd St. June 26 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

RECITALS

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ALLIANCE SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY CONCERTS
The A.C.A., a longtime publisher of American composers (mostly modernist) and a staunch defender of their interests, celebrates its seventieth anniversary with a series of concerts that begins with a performance of John Eaton's latest "pocket opera," "Pumped Fiction." (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. June 20 at 8. For complete listings, see www.composers.com.)

BARGEMUSIC
Some highlights from a week at the floating chamber-music series, busier and more adventurous than ever. June 20 at 8: Video art at the barge? That's the plan, with a set of works for solo flute and electronic multimedia offered by the duo Modiano & Ralsk. ♦ June 22 at 8: The violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Maurycy Banaszek, and other musicians gather to offer a string quartet by Mozart (in G Major, K. 387) and string quintets by Mozart (in G Minor, K. 516) and Mendelssohn (No. 2 in B-Flat Major). ♦ June 23 at 8 and June 24 at 4: The same fine crew substitutes a Haydn quartet (in A Major, Op. 20, No. 6) for Mozart's, with the Mozart and Mendelssohn quintets reprised. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For full listing, see www.bargemusic.org.)

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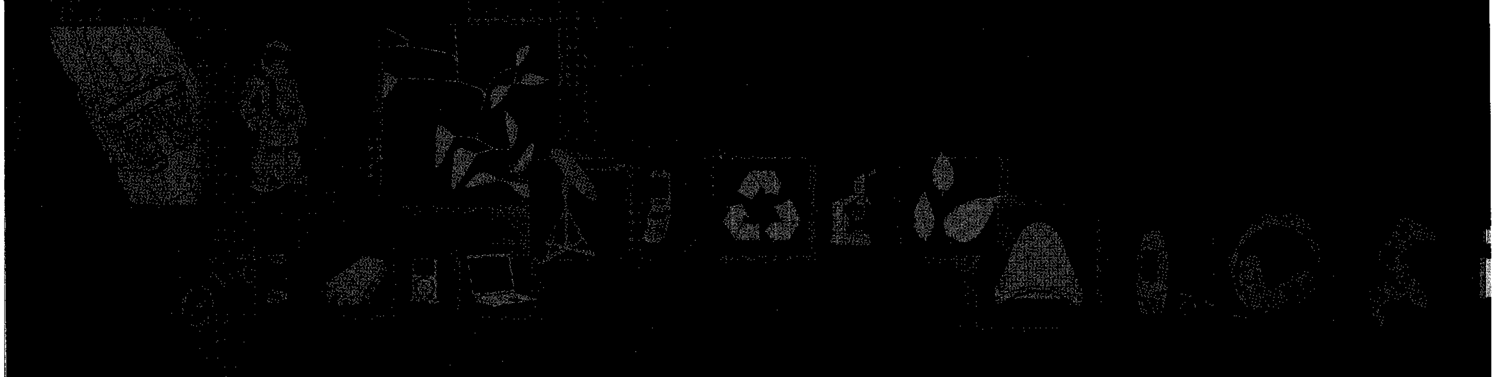

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lapse on the first day of summer, as a citywide festival of free performances (inspired by Paris's "Fête de la Musique") gets under way. Classical-minded participants include Greg Zuber (the principal percussionist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), the New York Consort of Viols, the Composers Collaborative (performing Terry Riley's "In C"), and members of the New York Philharmonic. (June 21, beginning at 11 A.M. For details, see www.makemusicny.org.)

THE STONE: NE(X)TWORKS
John Zorn's stripped-down performance space, housed in a former corner store in the East Village, is hosting a mini-festival featuring some of the downtown scene's most gifted composer-performers. June 24 at 8: Works by Joan La Barbara, Anthony Coleman, and Andrew Byrne, along with Xenakis's trombone solo, "Keren." ♦ June 24 at 10: Music by Cornelius Dufallo, Peter Zummo ("Instruments"), and Michael Schumacher (a première). (Ave. C at 2nd St. Tickets at the door.)

MANNES SUMMER INSTITUTE OF ART SONG IN SPANISH
Now that the English-language art-song repertory has gained some major exposure, it's time to open up the treasury of songs written by Spanish composers. The New School's musical division begins its celebration of the genre with a faculty concert (featuring the mezzo-soprano Nan Maro Babakhanian) of works by such composers as Falla, Rodrigo, Mompou, and Julio Gomez (an American première). (Queen Sofia Spanish Institute, 684 Park Ave. Tickets at the door. June 26 at 6.)

OUT OF TOWN

BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL: LULLY'S "PSYCHÉ"
The festival's renowned group of Baroque experts, in collaboration with the Berkshire Opera Company, offer the 1678 *tragédie-lyrique* by the French composer and his distinguished librettist, Thomas Corneille. Carolyn Sampson and Karina Gauvin, in the roles of Psyché and Venus, lead the cast; the guitarists Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, along with the concertmaster, Robert Mealy, lead from the pit. (Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, Mass. 413-528-0100. June 22-23 at 7 and June 24 at 2:30.)

WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
Hudson Valley habitués willing to take a little drive to the interior will be rewarded by the opening performance of the festival's concentrated but impressive season, an evening with the dynamic virtuosos of Trio Solisti; their program features works by Piazzolla ("Le Grand Tango" and "Four Seasons"), along with music by Turina and Schoenberg (Edward Steuermann's piano-trio arrangement of Schoenberg's rhapsodic "Verklärte Nacht"). (Windham, N.Y. 518-734-3868. June 23 at 8.)

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE
The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—the undisputed heavyweight of American piano trios—joins the violist Michael Tree and the clarinettist Ricardo Morales to perform piano quartets by Mozart and Richard Danielpour, along with Brahms's Clarinet Trio, Op. 114. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 518-537-6665. June 23 at 8.)

CARAMOOR
Westchester's smaller, more genteel answer to Tanglewood offers high-calibre concerts on the grounds of a verdant country estate. Peter Oundjian, the organization's music adviser and principal conductor, starts off the season by leading the Orchestra of St. Luke's in an evening of music by Rossini (the "Barber of Seville" Overture), Kodály, and Brahms (the lofty Piano Concerto No. 2, with Hélène Grimaud). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. June 23 at 8:30.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The country's oldest continuing summer chamber-music series is a truly rustic affair, with concerts offered in a Fijian-style music chapel nestled deep in the woods. The Imani Winds, an acclaimed African-American and Latina wind quintet, makes its Maverick début this week with a concert of works by Ravel (an arrangement of "Le Tombeau de Cou-

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TABLES FOR TWO
PALO SANTO

652 Union St., between Fourth and Fifth Aves., Brooklyn (718-636-6311)—Tucked in the middle of a mostly residential block in Park Slope, this polished new restaurant feels so of a piece with its neighborhood it's as though it sprang up fully formed. An evening's meal, in its fresh simplicity, might have had its origins in the nearby Co-op: there's a crisp chayote salad, with tart, juicy grapefruit; wahoo with a roasted plantain, served in its blackened skin; a satisfying chicken mole. The staff is warm and casual, and the experience is pleasing, though not exactly transcendent—it'd be easy to write off Palo Santo as a place to go when you aren't up for a culinary challenge. But everything is not as it seems. In the same way that the familiar lines of the restaurant's brownstone building are offset by an intricately curlicued wrought-iron railing, the regular menu provides a stage for the tasting menu, which offers rigorously constructed dishes that use ordinary ingredients to surprising effect.

The nine or so courses take in a wide variety of heat and texture: on a recent evening, they included delicate grilled trout, set on top of radishes, green beans, and purple potatoes; braised pork shank, soft and steeped in wine; a superb strawberry-rhubarb crisp, with a slightly salty crumble on top, tempering the ripe sweetness of the fruit. Jacques Gautier, the chef and owner, leaned over the counter that separates the open kitchen from the dining room, to provide commentary. Of the trout: "I was doing a TV segment and I came up with this dish, kind of weird but nice and colorful. I thought I'd made it up, but then I was in Bolivia and they were serving it there, on the street." He had particular enthusiasm for a Mexican Zinfandel that accompanied the pork: "It's from Baja California. The soil where they grow the grapes is kind of salty, there by the ocean, and you get that little whiff of saline in the nose." His contagious charm smoothed over some of the lesser moments: a forgettable *ceviche misto*, an uneven entrée of rabbit done three ways.

Gautier and several artists spent a year and a half meticulously renovating the restaurant's interior, combining local and exotic elements. The wood for the tables and chairs was salvaged from demolition sites nearby on Fourth Avenue; a mural of a stylized Andean landscape stretches across one wall. On weekend mornings, sunlight floods through the cathedral window; the turquoise touches on the walls give the dining room an aqueous cool, and the scent of oranges is in the air. (Open weekdays for dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $16-$23; tasting menu $45 per person, or $75 with wine pairing.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

perin”) and Paquito D’Rivera, along with a quintet by the young Thai composer Narong Prangcharoen. (Woodstock, N.Y. June 24 at 3. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Northwest Connecticut’s summer shrine to the string quartet, which hosts its concerts in an acoustically satisfying whitewashed box of a hall, continues its season with a performance by the Arianna String Quartet, which will be joined by the veteran violist Samuel Rhodes in a program of works by Shostakovich (the Quartet No. 1, “Springtime”), Mendelssohn, and Brahms (the Viola Quintet in G Major, Op. 111). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 24 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

BLACK SHEEP
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 22. (Sunshine Cinema.)

BROKEN ENGLISH
A romantic comedy, directed by Zoe Cassavetes, about a single woman (Parker Posey) who meets a French man (Melvil Poupaud) after her mother (Gena Rowlands) urges her to get married. Opening June 22. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

DOA: DEAD OR ALIVE
Corey Yuen directed this adaptation of a martial-arts video game. Starring Jaime Pressly and Devon Aoki. Opening June 22. (In wide release.)

EVAN ALMIGHTY
In this sequel to “Bruce Almighty,” God (Morgan Freeman) tells a congressman (Steve Carell) to build an ark. Opening June 22. (In wide release.)

1408
An adaptation, by Mikael Håfström, of Stephen King’s short story about a writer who checks into an accursed hotel room. Starring John Cusack. Opening June 22. (In wide release.)

LADY CHATTERLEY
Pascale Ferran directed this adaptation of the second version of D. H. Lawrence’s novel. In French. Opening June 22. (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MANUFACTURED LANDSCAPES
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 20. (Film Forum.)

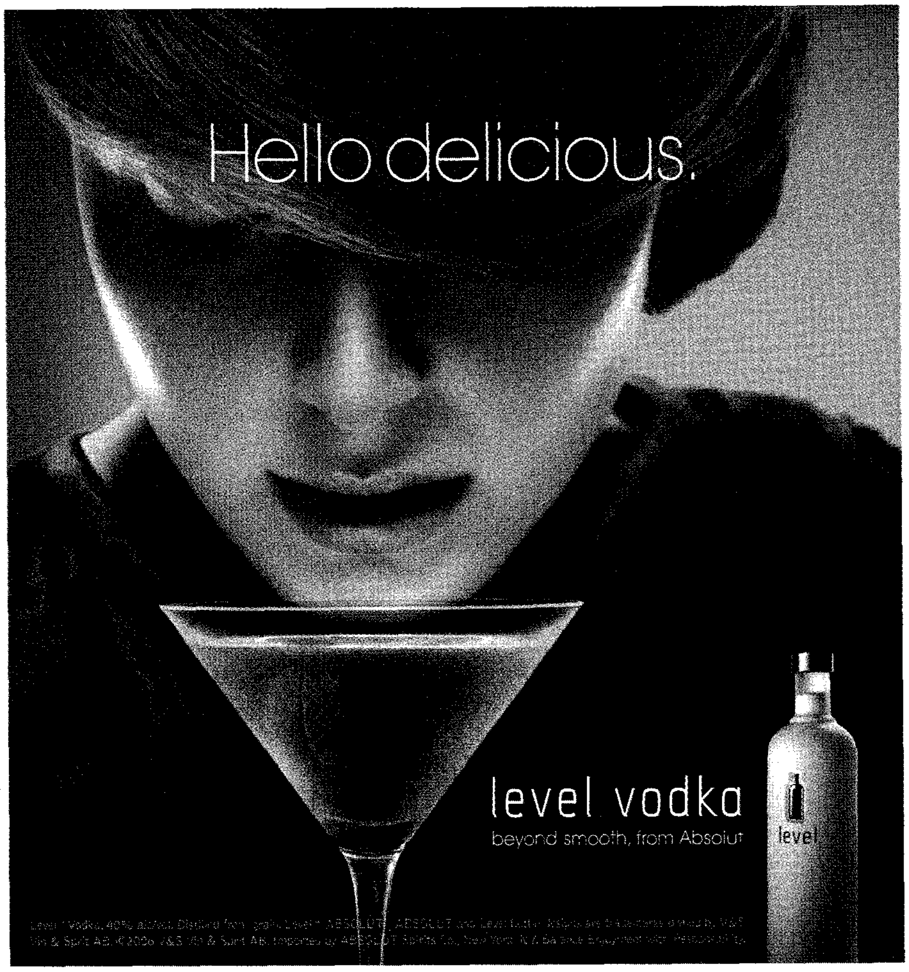
A MIGHTY HEART
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 22. (In wide release.)

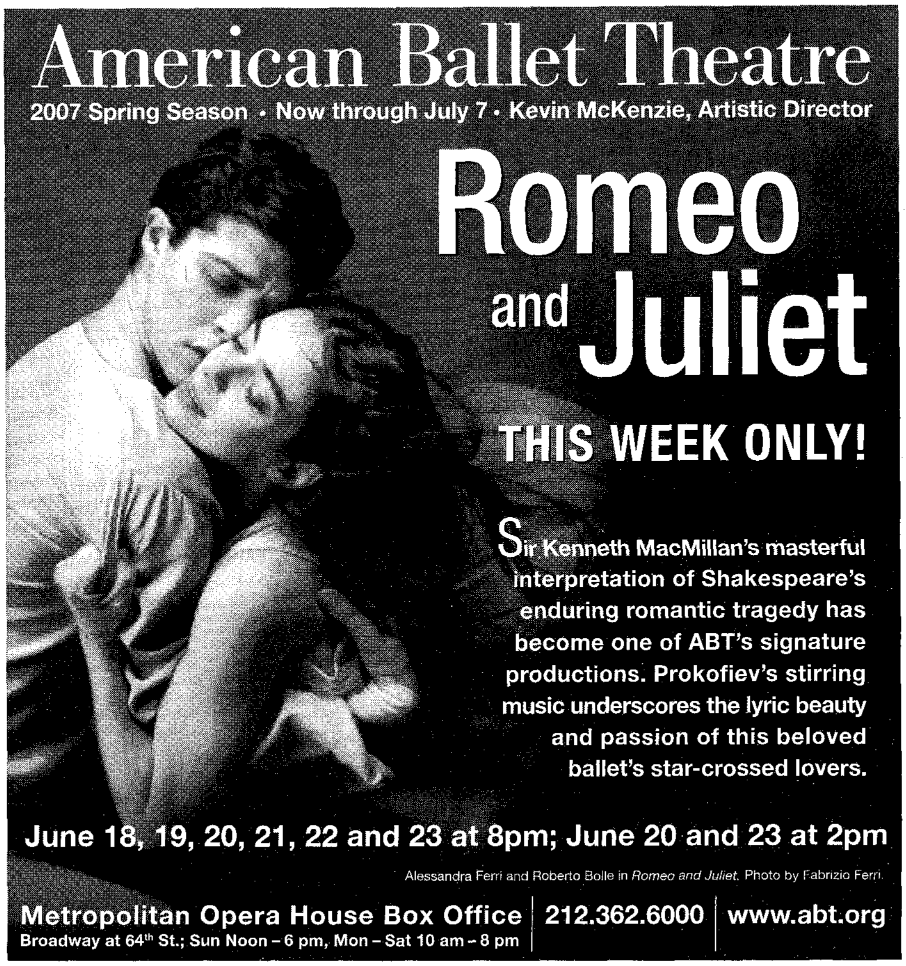
THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 22. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

YOU KILL ME
A comic thriller, directed by John Dahl, about a hit man who is disciplined by the Mob. Starring Luke Wilson, Ben Kingsley, and Téa Leoni. Opening June 22. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

BLACK SHEEP
“The Birds” with sheep. The director Jonathan King’s horror film, about a small herding community in New Zealand that is attacked by vicious, man-eating sheep, is ludicrous fun. As two brothers (Nathan Meister and Peter Feeney) wrangle over the business concerns of their late father’s farm, the science-gone-too-far plotlines (genetic experiments gone awry) and emotional hysteria (one brother has a severe sheep phobia) pile up and play sublimely, in a thirties-horror-movie way. Although the dialogue is filled with zingers that don’t quite hit the mark, their madcap delivery zooms the picture along. King allows the blood-soaked mayhem to stand out vibrantly against the lovingly photographed hills, and the twists and turns of his screenplay (as when some victims turn into sheep themselves) are outlandishly entertaining.—*Bruce Diones* (Sunshine Cinema.)




American Ballet Theatre
2007 Spring Season • Now through July 7 • Kevin McKenzie, Artistic Director
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Alessandra Ferri and Roberto Bolle in *Romeo and Juliet*. Photo by Fabrizio Ferri.
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Broadway at 64th St.; Sun Noon – 6 pm, Mon – Sat 10 am – 8 pm

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
RIGHT IN THE KISSER

Has anyone filled the gap in cinema left by Jean-Paul Belmondo? He no longer makes movies, but when he arrived in them, in the late nineteen-fifties, he looked

JASHAR AWAN

like a boxer fresh from the ring, with a bashed-up ruefulness. Consorting with that thuggish threat, however, was a delicacy that never ceased to surprise; trading punches with a gas-station attendant in Jean-Luc Godard's "Pierrot le Fou" (1965), Belmondo moves as nimbly as Astaire. The film runs at BAM through June 26, joined for two days by "Breathless" (1959), an earlier conjunction of director and star. Both works show Belmondo falling in love as easily as someone tripping over a step; in "Pierrot" he plays Ferdinand, who, armed with a gun and an unwavering cigarette, quits his family and heads for the South of France with Marianne (Anna Karina), his children's babysitter. The result, whose power to overwhelm and offend is undiminished, is like an explosive response to Rousseau: a man throws off the chains that bind him, only to discover his inner guerrilla.

—*Anthony Lane*

CRAZY LOVE

In 1959, about the same time that Doris Day defended her honor from Rock Hudson's assault in "Pillow Talk," an extraordinarily pretty Bronx girl named Linda Riss fought off a married lawyer. Burt Pugach was thirty-two, Linda ten years younger. He wasn't much to look at, and his honesty, both personal and professional, was intermittent at best, but he had some money. When she fell in love with a handsome young man, Burt hired three thugs to throw acid in her face so that the suitor would no longer want her. This barbaric act, which left Linda nearly sightless, wound up binding Burt and Linda together for life. Dan Klores's documentary is a real-world story, as redolent of time and place as a song by Dion and the Belmonts, in which possessiveness, stupidity, loyalty, and need are joined together in bewildering combinations. It's as if some disreputable and unending liaison out of the Greek myths arose on the streets of the East Bronx to be celebrated not with epic poetry but with front-page headlines in the tabloids. Klores takes the media-archeological approach—lots of still photographs, home movies, stock footage, and current-day interviews. One may be horrified or amused by this couple, but one is also mightily impressed by their talent for survival.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/11 & 18/07.) (BAM Rose Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

INVADERS FROM MARS

An ideal first science-fiction film for grade-schoolers, who inevitably put themselves in the place of the child hero, David MacLean (Jimmy Hunt), a science aficionado whose lack of pretension and gush keeps him from coming off as a nerd. After he spots a spaceship touching down in the hills just beyond his back yard, he tries to warn the authorities that the Martians have landed and are turning the neighbors into slaves by a mysterious process that leaves a scar on the back of the neck. When he's struggling to convince the cops, the film becomes Kafka for kids; it holds up as a divertissement because of the humorous, haunting incongruity between fifties Middle America and the alien spaceship. The director, William Cameron Menzies, emulates Norman Rockwell's tones and compositions, then twists them, creating a "Twilight Zone" atmosphere: a sense of catastrophe hovers over this settled, seemingly impregnable world. Some of the effects are chintzy, but Menzies's suggestions of people falling into a whirling sand pit are eerier than anything in Tobe Hooper's 1986 remake. So is his Martian heat ray, which causes walls to swell and pop as if they had a galloping outbreak of acne. Released in 1953.—*Michael Sragow* (Pioneer Theatre; June 23.)

KNOCKED UP

Ben Stone (Seth Rogen) is a feckless oaf with a wide grin, a bong, and four lazy housemates who are too old to be boys but will never, unless fate takes a hand, bother to grow into men. Fate, however, has plans for Ben, who drunkenly sleeps with a bright, ambitious woman named Alison (Katherine Heigl) and gets her pregnant. If you can accept the premise of Judd Apatow's movie—that Alison would not just keep the baby but ask Ben to become a proper father, with his share of responsibilities—then there is much to relish here. As in Apatow's last picture, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," the cream of the gags go to supporting players; characters like Alison's unhappy sister (Leslie Mann) and the spiteful colleague (Kristen Wiig) at the TV studio where she works land the sharpest blows. Much of the movie, indeed, slides from the easy laugh to the painful wince; even if you tire of Apatow's vomit jokes, or his teen-aged weakness for smut, there are flashes of disarming honesty here from which more earnest films might shy away.—*Anthony Lane* (6/4/07) (In wide release.)

MANUFACTURED LANDSCAPES

Jennifer Baichwal's documentary about the photographer Edward Burtynsky is better than the photographs it celebrates. Tagging along on his trip to China, where he takes intricately detailed pictures of colossal industrial activities and their aftermath, she captures far more effectively with her movie camera the intimate experience of rapid industrialization—the drudgery of exacting factory labor, the inhuman scale of urban development in Shanghai, workers enlisted to destroy their own cities at the Three Gorges Dam. Starting with an eight-minute tracking shot inside a vast, hangarlike factory (an old trick redone surprisingly well), she adds a bracing dose of brainwork to his tireless legwork. A Burtynsky photograph taken outside the factory impassively depicts an enormous Riefenstahl-like array of uniformed laborers (organized at the photographer's request), but Baichwal gets close enough to hear a foreman chide his off-duty underlings for the quality of their work.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

MR. BROOKS

Just as some men might give in to a hidden taste for pornography, or perhaps for Transcendental Meditation or poetry writing, Mr. Brooks (Kevin Costner), a pillar of the community in Portland, Oregon, is addicted to murder. Every now and then, over a period of years, and with considerable guilt as well as enjoyment, he has gone out at night and committed a perfect crime. He has a superb enabler—an alter ego (William Hurt) whom, for some reason, he calls Marshall and who, sitting in the back of a car or on the side of a room, accompanies him everywhere. Marshall is Mr. Brooks's desire, his madness, and his sanity, too—the part of him that wants to kill people and that also calculates how to avoid getting caught. When Costner and Hurt are fighting with each other, or just chatting, this peculiar thriller, written by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon and directed by Evans, is witty and fresh. The rest is well made but more conventional. With the comic Dane Cook as a blackmailing voyeur who wants to accompany Mr. Brooks, Demi Moore in full battle armor as a tough cop who has to fight off an escaped killer and a parasitical husband, and Danielle Panabaker as Mr. Brooks's college-age daughter, who may have murderous tendencies herself.—*D.D.* (6/11 & 18/07) (In wide release.)

NANCY DREW

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

OCEAN'S THIRTEEN

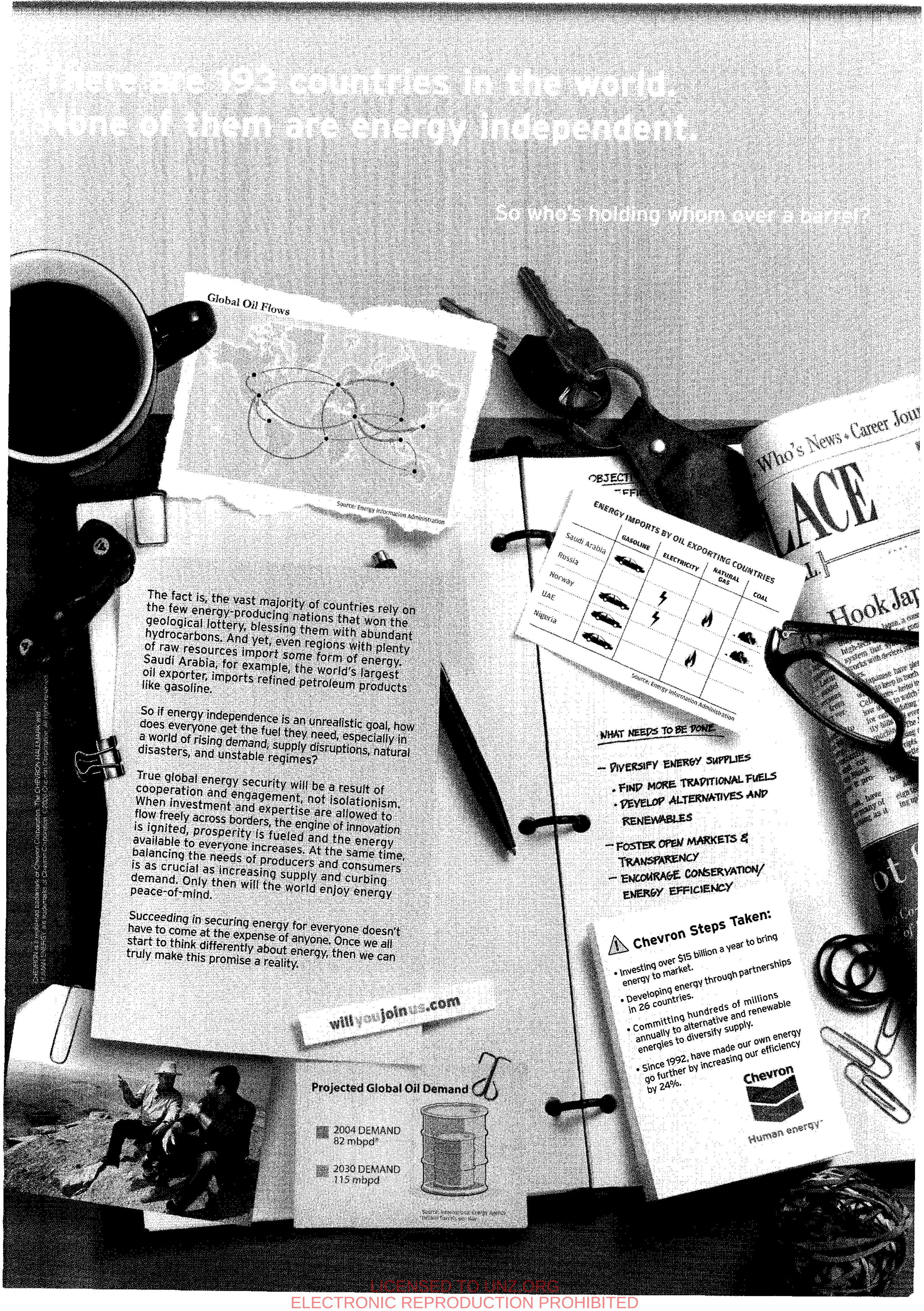
Certainly a more hardworking movie than "Twelve," in which the actors, lounging at George Clooney's villa on Lake Como, barely condescended to speak their lines between drinks. In this one, a nasty Vegas hotel owner, Willie Bank (Al Pacino), has swindled the gang's beloved mentor, Reuben (Elliott Gould), so Danny (Clooney) and the others plan to louse up the opening of Bank's new hotel. The elaborate revenge plot, concocted by the screenwriters Brian Koppelman and David Levien, involves magnetizing dice and creating an earthquake. But, after all the elaborate preparations, the payoff is rather meagre. You can build a ship—maybe even a whole fleet—in a bottle, but then what do you do with it? With Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, et al. Directed by Steven Soderbergh.—*D.D.* (6/11 & 18/07) (In wide release.)

THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN

Taggart Siegel's documentary chronicles the plight of Midwestern farmers with the story of John Peterson (who wrote and provides the voice-over), an all-American boy who was raised on his family's farm, in Caledonia, Illinois. Peterson comes off as a peripatetic, romantic soul who craved an outlet for eccentric self-expression; after travelling to Mexico in a failed attempt to emulate Henry Miller, he returned, depressed, to the abandoned farm (which he inherited following his father's untimely death), only to be plagued by unneighborly accusations of Satan worship. His conversations with his hardworking firecracker of a mother, Anna, reveal the ethics that she steadfastly instilled in him. Eventually, Peterson rallied and began to farm organically—a painstaking, unprofitable endeavor that eventually grew into a bountiful agronomic utopia. His story offers an example not only of the spiritual value of honoring one's provenance but also of how sustained effort can lead to greatness.—*Shauna Lyon* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

THE TESTAMENT OF ORPHEUS

Jean Cocteau begins this reflective fantasy, from 1959, as a periwigged poet forced to wander through time, before getting fixed in modernity by a bullet going faster than light. His farewell film is a self-portrait in poignant, satirical skits, using film clips,



There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.

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The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import *some* form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

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True global energy security will be a result of cooperation and engagement, not isolationism. When investment and expertise are allowed to flow freely across borders, the engine of innovation is ignited, *prosperity* is fueled and the energy available to everyone increases. At the same time, balancing the needs of producers and consumers is as crucial as increasing supply and curbing demand. Only then will the world enjoy energy peace-of-mind.

Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia	🚗			
Russia		⚡	🔥	●
Norway	🚗	⚡		●
UAE	🚗		🔥	
Nigeria	🚗			

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
  - FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
  - DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
- FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
- ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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Projected Global Oil Demand

▨ 2004 DEMAND
82 mbpd*

▨ 2030 DEMAND
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Source: International Energy Agency
*million barrels per day

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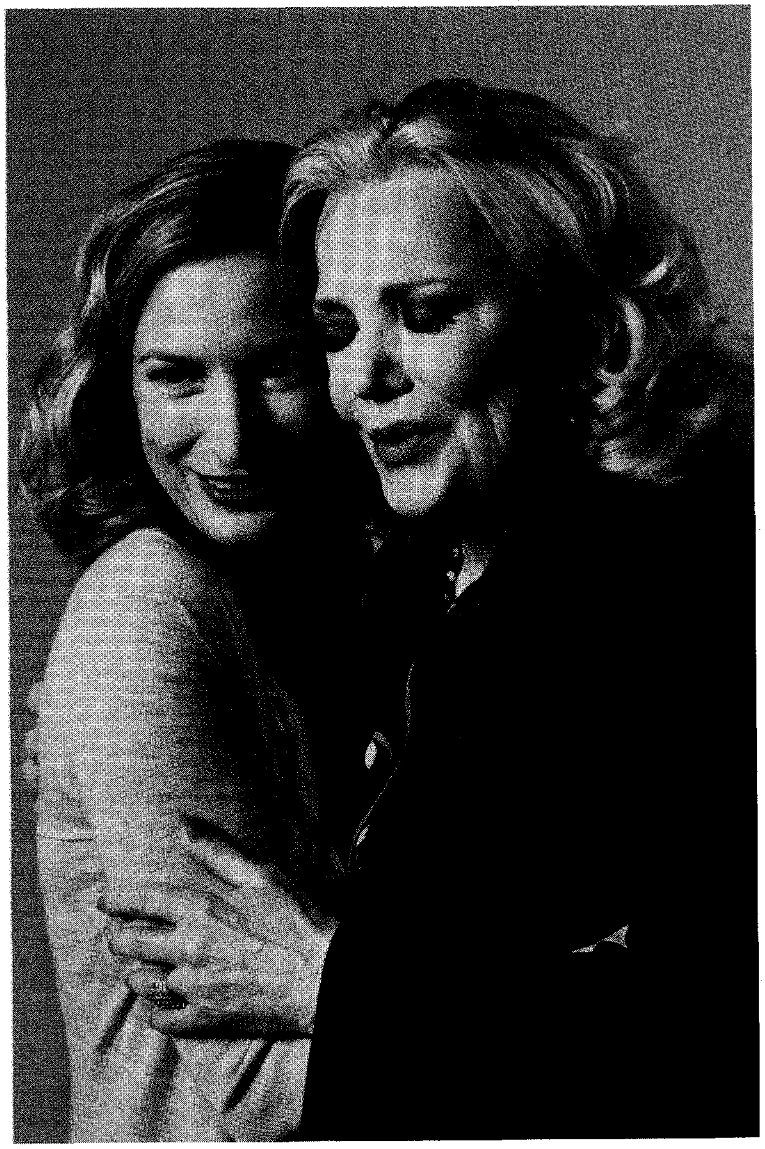
characters, and people from his life and work, especially his 1950 masterpiece, "Orpheus." The young poet from that film, Cégeste (Edouard Dhermitte, who also appears in his real-life role as Cocteau's adopted son), returns to guide the gaunt, troubled director to the underworld, where he is judged by the Princess of Death (Maria Casares) and Heurtebise (François Périer); Cocteau's self-defense turns into a manifesto of the arts of cinema and poetry, which, for him, are inseparable. Using wondrously simple trick photography and scenic artistry, he gives a genially self-pitying overview of a long life used up in the name of art. With one foot in the French New Wave and the other in the Ballets Russes, Cocteau contains a raging confession in a serene, sensuous neoclassical vessel. In French.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; June 21 and June 24.)

LA VIE EN ROSE

This ambitious French bio-pic devoted to the great Edith Piaf is fascinating, exhausting, and overwrought—a death trip. Born in 1915, Piaf (Marion Cotillard) was raised in a brothel, a travelling circus, and the bars and streets of Paris, where she developed the voice—somehow both metallic and throaty, coarse and soulful—that electrified the French and, after the war, the Americans, too. Cotillard gives an amazing performance: frail and, at times, bent (Piaf suffered from arthritis), she can look terrified and vicious simultaneously, and she goes all the way with the writer-director Olivier Dahan's concept, which emphasizes Piaf's suffering as a child and young woman and her monstrousness as an adult. The actual Piaf, who helped Charles Aznavour and Yves Montand when they were young, was generous to the talented; this Piaf is abominably self-centered and often cruel, always alcoholic and frequently drug-addicted. The movie is a remorselessly downbeat version of a gin-and-tears Hollywood bio-pic. With Gerard Depardieu as Piaf's first great patron, Sylvie Testud as a constant friend, Pascal Greggory as her adoring but often abused manager, and the handsome and polite Jean-Pierre Martins as the great love of Piaf's life, the middleweight boxing champion Marcel Cerdan. In French.—*D.D.* (In limited release.)

Also Playing

FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER: In wide release. **GYPSY CARAVAN:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **STRIKE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **SURF'S UP:** In wide release.



Zoe Cassavetes directs her mother, Gena Rowlands, in "Broken English."

MACIEK KOBIELSKI

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In première. June 22 and June 25-28 at 7 and 9 and June 23-24 at 5, 7, and 9: "Longing" (2006, Valeska Grisebach; in German). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 23 at 6: Short films by Christopher Maclaine (1953-59). ♦ June 23 at 7:30: Short films by Ron Rice, Hans Richter, and Paul Sharits. ♦ June 24 at 4:30: "Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania" (1971-1972, Jonas Mekas). ♦ June 24 at 6:30: "Diaries, Notes & Sketches (Walden)" (1964-68, Mekas).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Special screenings. June 20-21 and June 25-26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15 and June 22-24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Pierrot le Fou" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 20-28 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Let's Get Lost" (1988, Bruce Weber).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through July 31: The films of René Clair. June 26 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Le Million" (1931; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. June 22-24 at noon: "The Flowers of St. Francis" (1950, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ New York Asian Film Festival. For complete program information, visit www.subwaycinema.com. June 22 at 6:10: "Getting Home" (2007, Zhang Yang; in Mandarin). ♦ June 23 at 2: "Exiled" (2006, Johnnie To; in Cantonese). ♦ June 23 at 4:15: "Dog Bite Dog" (2006, Soi Cheang; in Cantonese and Cambodian). ♦ June 23 at 8:20: "Dasepo Naughty Girls" (2006, E. J-Yong; in Korean). ♦ June 23 at 10:30: "Hard Boiled" (1992, John Woo; in Cantonese). ♦ June 24 at 1:30: "After This Our Exile" (2006, Patrick Tam; in Cantonese). ♦ June 24 at 6:20: "I'm a Cyborg, but That's OK" (2006, Park Chanwook; in Korean). ♦ June 24 at 8:30: "Hula Girls" (2006, Lee Sang-il; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 22-23: "Drawing Restraint 9" (2006, Matthew Barney).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"John Wayne Centenary." June 20 at 6: "The Big Trail" (1930, Raoul Walsh). ♦ June 20 at 8:30 and June 23 at 2: "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" (1949, John Ford). ♦ June 22 at 8:25: "They Were Expendable" (1945, Ford). ♦ June 23 at 4:30: "The Searchers" (1956, Ford). ♦ June 25 at 8:30: "Donovan's Reef" (1963, Ford). ♦ "Still Moving." June 21 at 8: "Blackmail" (1929, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ June 23 at 6: "The Conversation" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ June 25 at 6: "Peg o' My Heart" (1922, King Vidor; silent). ♦ Special screening. June 21 at 7: "Phantom Love" (2007, Nina Menkes). ♦ The Films of Mahamat Saleh Haroun. Except where noted, all films are in Chadian Arabic. June 22 at 6:30: "Bye Bye, Africa" (1998). ♦ June 24 at 2: "Kalala" (2005; in Chadian Arabic and French). ♦ June 24 at 4: "Abouna" (2002). ♦ June 25 at 6:30: "Daratt" (2006).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"It's Only a Movie: Horror Films from the 1970s and Today." June 23 at 2: "The Hills Have Eyes" (1977, Wes Craven). ♦ June 23 at 4: "The Hills Have Eyes" (2006, Alexandre Aja). ♦ June 24 at 2: "The Host" (2006, Bong Joonho; in Korean). ♦ June 24 at 4:30: "The Bird with the Crystal Plumage" (1970, Dario Argento; in Italian). ♦ June 24 at 6:30: "High Tension" (2003, Aja; in French).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In revival. June 21 and June 24 at 7: "Orpheus" (1950, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ June 21 and June 24 at 9: "The Testament of Orpheus" (†). ♦ "UFOs: The Culture of Contact," a film series and conference. June 22 at 8: "Earth vs. the Flying Saucers" (1956, Fred F. Sears). ♦ June 23 at 3:15: "Invaders from Mars" (†). ♦ June 23 at 5:45: "Stranger from Venus" (1954, Burt Balaban). ♦ June 23 at 10:30: "Contact" (1997, Robert Zemeckis). ♦ Preview screening. June 26 at 7: "Flying" (2007, Jennifer Fox).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

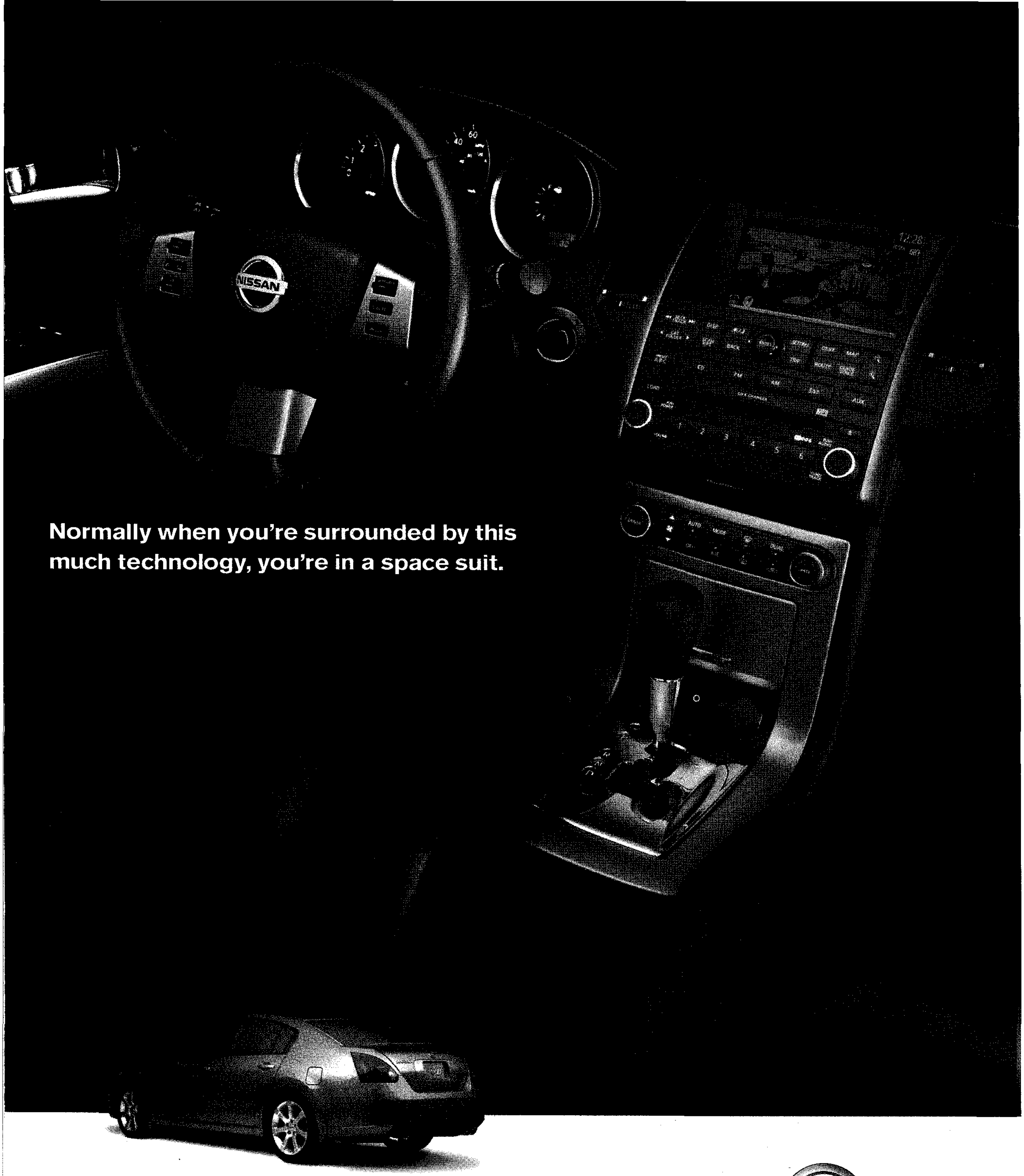
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." June 22 at 9:30: "Caché (Hidden)" (2005, Michael Haneke; in French).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. June 24 at 8 and June 26 at 9: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (1966, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. June 20 at 2, June 22 at 4, June 23 at 9, and June 24 at 1:30: "Suffering and Smiling" (2007, Dan Ollman). ♦ June 20 at 6:30, June 21 at 1:30, and June 24 at 3:30: "Lumo" (2007, Bent-Jorgen Perlmutt, Nelson Walker III, Louis Abelman, and Lynn True). ♦ June 20 at 8:45: "Carla's List" (2006, Marcel Schüpbach; in French, English, Serbo-Croatian, and Italian). ♦ June 21 at 4 and 9 and June 22 at 6:30: "White Light/Black Rain" (2007, Steven Okazaki; in Japanese). ♦ June 21 at 6:30: "Banished" (2006, Marco Williams). ♦ June 22 at 1:30, June 23 at 6:30, and June 24 at 8:30: "Cocalero" (2007,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Alejandro Landes; in Spanish). ♦ June 25 at 6:30 and June 26 at 1:30 and 9: "Hot House" (2006, Shimon Dotan; in Hebrew and Arabic).

READINGS AND TALKS

"PARK-LIT"
The outdoor summer reading series, curated by noted literary magazines, gets under way for its fourth year with an evening featuring Luc Sante, Thomas Beller, Betsy Berne, and other contributors to the Web site Mr. Beller's Neighborhood. (Abingdon Square Park, W. 12th St. between Hudson St. and Eighth Ave. For more information, call 212-696-6609. June 20 at 6:30.)

POETS HOUSE
The literary center, which is currently based in SoHo, will be moving to Battery Park City next year. On June 20 at 7, it presents the poets Chris Abani, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Suji Kwock Kim, Carol Muske-Dukes, U Sam Oeur, Mark Strand, and Franz Wright in Rockefeller Park, not far from its future home. The hip-hop artist Taylor McFerrin will also be on hand. (For more information, call 212-431-7920.)

"MAD. SQ. READS"
The restaurateur Danny Meyer's vast holdings include the Shake Shack, in Madison Square Park. On June 21 at 6:30, he visits the park to share anecdotes and to read from his book "Setting the Table: The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business." He'll be joined by the food writer David Kamp, whose latest book is "The United States of Arugula: How We Became a Gourmet Nation." (Fifth Ave. at 24th St. For more information, call 212-538-6667.)

"THE SALON SERIES"
The Fire Dept, a new theatre company, presents a reading of plays about Iraq and the war, with the actors Michael Cerveris, Julianna Margulies, and David Strathairn. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. 212-352-3101. June 25 at 6:30.)

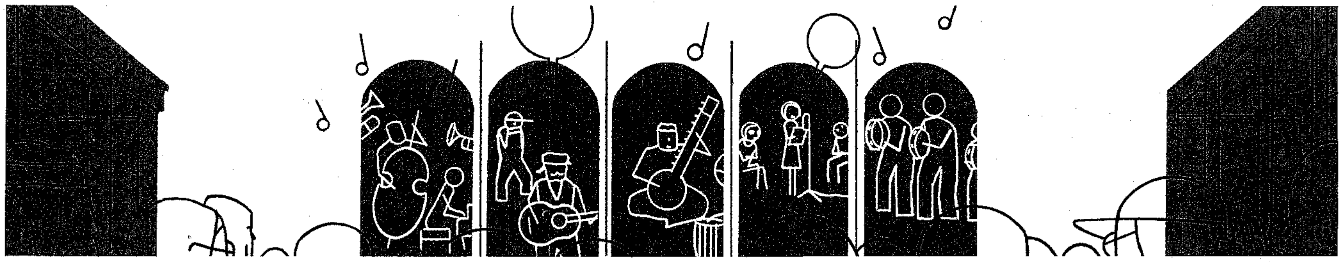
92ND STREET Y
Günter Grass reads from his memoir, "Peeling the Onion," in his native tongue. The actor Michael Stuhlbarg will read translated passages in English, and the Israeli journalist Amos Elon will provide the introductions and interview Grass after the reading. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. June 25 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"LITERARY UPSTART"
Throughout the past two months, contestants in *The L Magazine's* "American Idol"-like short-story-reading competition have presented their fiction before a panel of literary-world insiders. The three finalists—Franklin Winslow, Raphaela Weissman, and Lincoln Michel—face off on June 21, starting at 8:30. (The Baggot Inn, 82 W. 3rd St. No tickets necessary.)

SUMMER SOLSTICE
The New Age Pied Piper Paul Winter marks the changing of the seasons with an early-morning concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He'll be there on June 23 (which is two days into summer) at 4:30 A.M., with his Consort and a special guest, the Brazilian guitarist and singer Renato Braz. Expect him to play until the sun comes up, if not a little longer. ♦ Starting at 10 A.M., the cathedral is home to a family-friendly celebration where visitors can make sundials, sun prints, and stained-glass objects. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. For tickets to the concert, call 866-468-7619; for information about the event starting at 10 A.M., call 212-932-7347.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
For every category, there is a collector. Jerome Shochet, who usually deals in prizefighting memorabilia, has been collecting in a special category of historical photographs—examples that have been signed by the subjects themselves. Each lot in **Christie's** sale (June 19) is like a freeze-frame from history: for instance, a shot of the Japanese ceremony of surrender in 1945 aboard the U.S.S. Missouri, signed by General Yoshijiro Umezu, of the Imperial Japanese Army, and General Douglas MacArthur. Then the schedule takes a turn toward the domestic, with a House Sale of moderately priced furnishings and decorations (June 20-21), followed by an amusing auction of dog-themed art (June 22), the house's first, featuring some distinguished-looking pooches in repose, at work, and in the arms of their loving owners. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ A sale of books and manuscripts (including Americana) at **Sotheby's** (June 21) includes a working manuscript of "Alcoholics Anonymous," the groundbreaking manifesto by William Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith, laying out the principles of the recovery program that they founded, and the first draft of Jean Genet's transgressive "Journal du Voleur," a favorite of Sartre's. Then there's an "arcade" auction of furniture (June 22), where one can pick up a Nakashima walnut cabinet, a Fritz Henningsen Art Deco settee, or just the right Tiffany lamp. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)



LAURENT CILLUFFO

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
KEEN ON KINO
June 29-July 12

Walter Reade Theatre celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of Kino International with a program of familiar films and rarely screened classics, including Luis Buñuel's "L'Age d'Or." (212-875-5600.)

THE THEATRE
THIS IS THE LIFE
July 2-Sept. 30

The Spiegeltent returns to the South Street Seaport with a new after-hours variety show, "La Vie," featuring the acrobatic circus-theatre troupe the 7 Fingers. "Absinthe," the burlesque main attraction, introduces new acts, such as Olaf Triebel, who specializes in balancing on wooden rods, and reprises favorites from last year, like the Gazillionaire, an Armenian lounge lizard. (212-279-4200.)

ART
DURAND COUNTRY
July 5-Jan. 6

It's a big summer in New York for Asher B. Durand (1796-1886). The Hudson River School artist is the subject of shows now open at the Brooklyn Museum ("Kindred Spirits," through July 29) and the New-York Historical Society ("The World of Asher B. Durand: The Artist in Antebellum New York," through Sept. 30); a third show, at the National Academy, will focus on his influence as a landscape painter. (212-369-4880.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
GRAND TOUR
July 9-17

Every summer, the New York Philharmonic offers free parks concerts in the five boroughs and beyond. The grand finale, in Central Park, features the soprano Measha Brueggergosman and the conductor Andrew Davis. (212-875-5709.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
FAR OUT
Aug. 2-27

The Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival remembers the Summer of Love with more than a hundred free alfresco events, including performances by the folksinger Arlo Guthrie, the composer Pauline Oliveros, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and the Bread and Puppet Theatre. (www.lincolncenter.org.)

The Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival.

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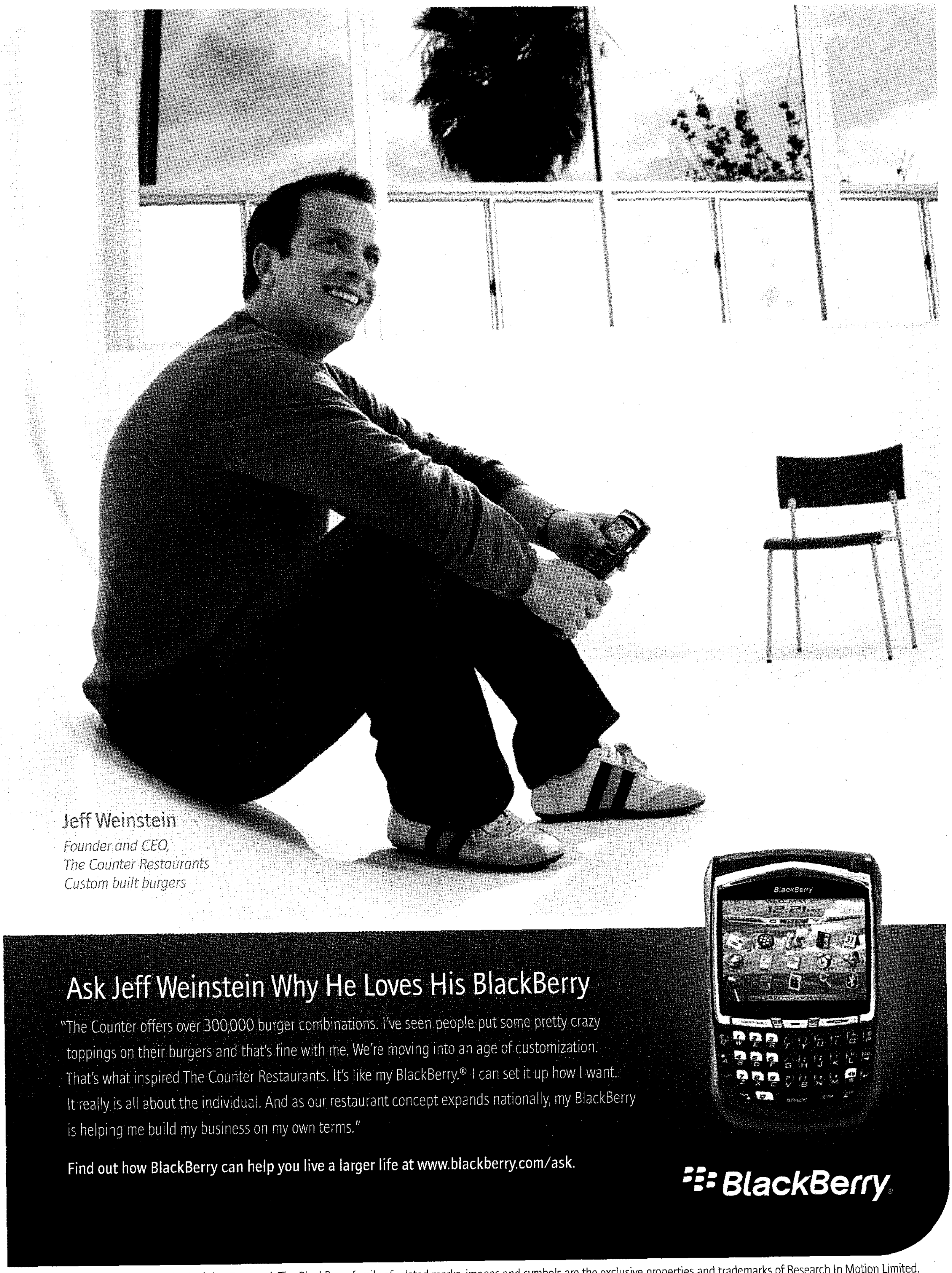

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

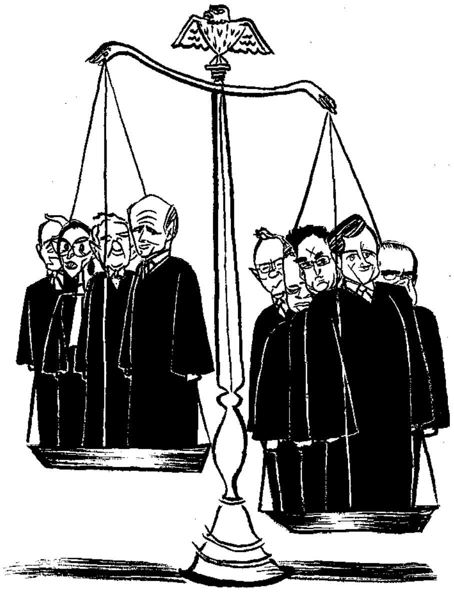
COMMENT
FIVE TO FOUR

As George W. Bush staggers toward the conclusion of his second term, he can point to at least one major and enduring project that has gone according to plan: the transformation of the Supreme Court. In the next week or so, the justices will begin their summer recess. The first full term in which Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., and Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., have served together will thus be completed, and the changes on the Court, and their implications for the nation, have been profound.

The careers of Roberts and Alito have been emblematic of the conservative ascendancy in American law. Both men, shortly after graduating from law school, joined the Reagan Administration, where Edwin Meese III, who was for a time the Attorney General, and others were building a comprehensive critique of the Supreme Court under Chief Justices Earl Warren and Warren E. Burger. The conservative agenda has remained largely unchanged in the decades since: Expand executive power. End racial preferences intended to assist African-Americans. Speed executions. Welcome religion into the public sphere. And, above all, reverse Roe v. Wade, and allow states to ban abortion. As Alito wrote in an application for a Justice Department promotion in 1985, his work on abortion and race cases, among other Reagan Administration priorities, had given him the chance "to advance legal positions in which I personally believe very strongly."

Moving with great swiftness, by the stately standards of the Court, Roberts, Alito, and their allies have already made progress on that agenda. In Alito's first major opinion as a justice, earlier this year, he sharply restricted the ability of victims of employment discrimination to file lawsuits. The Court said that plaintiffs in such cases must bring their suits within a hundred and eighty days of, say, an unfair raise. But, because it generally takes employees longer than that to establish that they have been cheated, the effect of the ruling will be to foreclose many lawsuits. In a similar vein, the Court upheld a death sentence in Washington by lessening the scrutiny applied to jury selection in such cases. Last week, the justices rejected an appeal by a prisoner who had filed his case before a deadline set by a federal district judge. Because the judge had misread the law and given the prisoner too much time—three extra days—the Court said that the case had to be thrown out.

Most notoriously, the Court, for the first time in its history, upheld a categorical ban on an abortion procedure. The case dealt with so-called partial-birth abortion—a procedure performed rarely, often when there are extraordinary risks to the mother, the fetus, or both. But more important than the ruling were the implications of Justice Anthony M. Kennedy's opinion. The Court all but abandoned the reasoning of Roe v. Wade (and its reaffirmation in the 1992 Casey decision) and adopted instead the assumptions and the rhetoric of the anti-abortion movement. To the Court, it was the partial-birth-abortion procedure, not the risks posed to the women who seek it, that was "laden with the power to devalue human life." In the most startling passage in the opinion, Kennedy wrote, "While we find no reliable data to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained." Small wonder that Kennedy's search for such data was unavailing; notwithstanding the claims of the anti-abortion movement, no intellectually respectable support exists for this patronizing notion. The decision to have



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

an abortion is never a simple one, but until this year the Court has said that the women affected, not the state, had the last word.

All these conservative victories were decided by votes of five to four, with Kennedy joining Roberts, Alito, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas to form the majority. (The last big case outstanding this term is a challenge to school-desegregation plans in Louisville and Seattle. Based on the oral argument, Kennedy appears likely to join the same quartet in striking down the plans.) Kennedy holds the balance of power in the Roberts Court, much the way Sandra Day O'Connor did in the Rehnquist years. Kennedy is more conservative than O'Connor, so the Court is, too. He sided with the liberals in only one important case this year, when the Court ruled that the gases that cause global warming are pollutants under the Clean Air Act, a ruling that repudiated the Bush Administration's narrow view of the law.

The Rehnquist Court had its share of divided rulings, of course—most notably, Bush v. Gore—but the new conservative ascendancy has prompted a striking reaction from the dissenting liberals, John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer. It has been the custom at the Court for dissenters to explain their views individually or in small groups; but this group, led by Stevens, the senior member of the Court, has taken to uniting around a single opinion, as if to emphasize a collective view that the majority is taking the law in dangerous directions. In the case about the missed appeal deadline, the dissenting opinion, by the usually mild-mannered Souter (who was joined by Stevens, Ginsburg, and Breyer), reflected true anguish: "It is intolerable for the judicial system to treat people this way, and there is not even a technical justification for condoning this bait and switch."

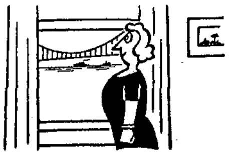
Ginsburg, who prides herself on her collegiality, has taken to reading her dissenting opinions aloud from the bench—a vigorous protest in the genteel world of the justices. In her dissent (also joined by the others) in the abortion case, she observed that in 2000 five justices rejected a Nebraska ban on partial-birth abortions that was nearly identical to the one the Court upheld this year. O'Connor was still on the Court and in the majority in the Nebraska case, so the only meaningful difference between then and now, as Ginsburg noted, is that the Court is "differently composed than it was when we last considered a restrictive abortion regulation."

And that, ultimately, is the point. When it comes to the incendiary political issues that end up in the Supreme Court, what matters is not the quality of the arguments but the identity of the justices. Presidents pick justices to extend their legacies; by this standard, Bush chose wisely. The days when justices surprised the Presidents who appointed them are over—the last two purported surprises, Souter and Kennedy, were anything but. Souter's record pegged him as a moderate; Kennedy was nominated because the more conservative Robert Bork was rejected by the Senate. All the subsequently appointed justices—Thomas, Ginsburg, Breyer, Roberts, and Alito—have turned out precisely as might have been expected by the Presidents who appointed them.

At this moment, the liberals face not only jurisprudential but actuarial peril. Stevens is eighty-seven and Ginsburg seventy-four; Roberts, Thomas, and Alito are in their fifties. The Court, no less than the Presidency, will be on the ballot next November, and a wise electorate will vote accordingly.

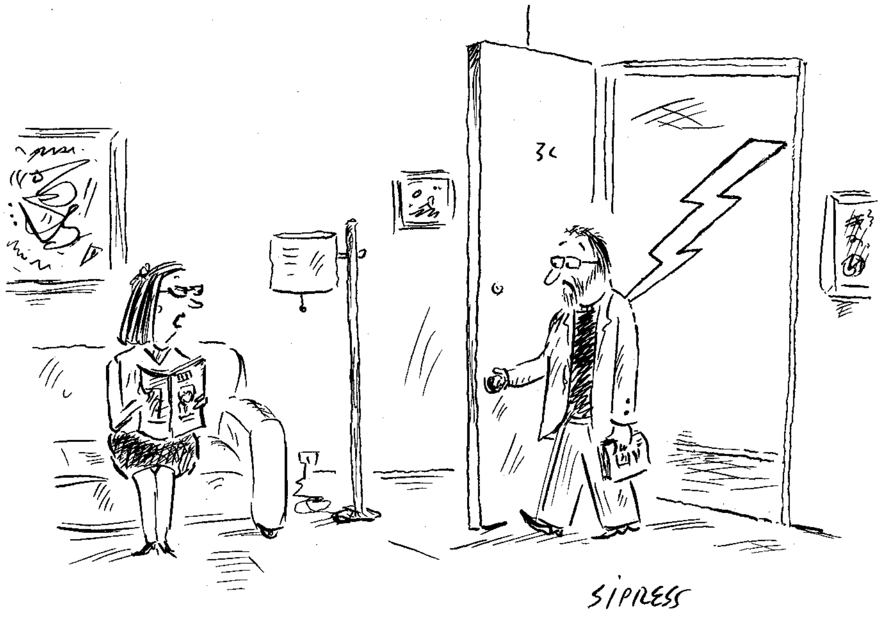
—Jeffrey Toobin

ON THE WATERFRONT MONUMENT



France gave us the Statue of Liberty. Now Russia has given us "To the Struggle Against World Terrorism," another XXL, in-a-class-of-its-own monument. If you have not seen it, that may be because you haven't recently approached New York City by ship. For those coming in from the Atlantic, through the Narrows, the Russian gift now heaves into view well before Lady Liberty. That is intentional, according to Zurab Tsereteli, the Moscow-based sculptor who created the monument. "To the Struggle Against World Terrorism" stands at the end of a long, man-made peninsula in Bayonne, New Jersey, and it looks from a distance like a giant tea biscuit. As you get closer, however, you will begin to make out an immense, stainless-steel teardrop—the Tear of Grief—hanging in a jagged crack that runs down the middle of the main slab. That's when you'll know that you're not looking at some ordinary bronze-sheathed, hundred-and-seventy-five-ton afternoon snack.

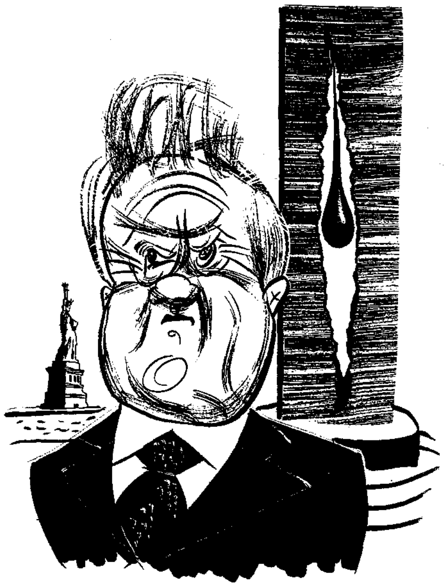
Tsereteli's inspiration came, he says, on September 11, 2001. "I saw the people gathered around the American Embassy," he said recently from Moscow. "The tear that came out of my eye and fell, that gave me the idea for the monu-



"I begged you not to buy that book by Christopher Hitchens."

ment." Tsereteli, who is seventy-three and bogglingly prolific, flew to New York, visited Ground Zero, and decided that it wasn't the appropriate place for the sculpture. He pitched it to Jersey City, where the mayor loved it.

But then the mayor died, and objections to the planned monument surfaced. A Jersey City artists' organization, for instance, called it "an insensitive, self-aggrandizing piece of pompousness by one of the world's blatant self-promoters." The project was put on hold. This was in 2004. Then it turned out that Bayonne, a city where artists do not exert undue influence, was in the market for a 9/11 memorial. Bayonne had only forty thousand dollars to spend, however. No problem, Tsereteli said. He would pay for "To the Struggle Against World Terrorism" himself.



Zurab Tsereteli

In the sweep of Tsereteli's career, the contretemps in Jersey City was a micro-skirmish. (His enemies once tried to blow up a three-hundred-foot-tall statue of "Peter the Great," which includes an enormous bronze galleon and now dominates the skyline of central Moscow.) He has decorated Soviet embassies around the world, won the Lenin Prize, and served as People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. He was Chief Artist of the Moscow Olympics. A minor planet has been named after him. (It's between Mars and Jupiter.) He is the president of the Russian Academy of the Arts, and in the Zurab Tsereteli Gallery, in Moscow, there stands today a statue of the judo master Vladimir Putin, barefoot and looking good.

For decades, no visiting head of state or celebrity has been safe from Tsereteli's attentions. Margaret Thatcher, Mother Teresa, the first President Bush, and Liza Minnelli have all found themselves at his gallery. At the White House with Boris Yeltsin soon after the death of President Clinton's mother, Tsereteli pressed into the President's hand a painting of her, made on a small block of ivory. Clinton, reportedly deeply touched, now displays the painting on his mantel in Chappaqua.

Tsereteli is short and built like a baby bull. His energy and charm are legendary. Still, skeptics wonder how he gets the valuable metals that go into his monuments—for instance, the unusually shiny stainless steel that covers the forty-foot Tear of Grief. Asked by telephone about the steel, Tsereteli got into a glum-sounding discussion in Russian with his grandson, Vasili, who, patched into the call from Venice, was acting as interpreter. Finally, Vasili said, "From a military factory that did airplanes. In Dzerzhinsk. A secret city."

What about the monument's financing? (It is widely said to have cost twelve million dollars to build.) "My grandfather paid the money," Vasili said.

But a black granite stone beside the monument, it was pointed out, carries the inscription "Gift from the People of Russia—President Vladimir Putin." (Putin himself attended the unveiling.)

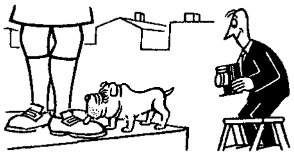
More discussion, with a sense of rising impatience in Moscow. Finally, Vasili: "He is a government employee, and he does many things in the name of the Russian government."

Today, a large banner hangs on a warehouse alongside the monument, with portraits of Putin and President George W. Bush facing one another across the battle cry "To the Struggle Against World Terrorism." Inscribed on the monument's base are the names of the 9/11 victims, along with the names of those who died in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The base has eleven sides. Nine pathways lead to it. The Tear of Grief is aligned, it is said, with the missing towers, across the water. On a recent sunny afternoon, two men drove up and parked near the monument—a Bayonne resident and his son, home from college. They walked around its base, studying the names. The father pointed at one with his shoe. "See, there's Noley," he said. Asked what he thought of the monument, the father looked up, shading his eyes against the ferocious brilliance of the Tear of Grief. "Pretty impressive," he said.

—*William Finnegan*

SHOW BIZ

BOY WITH DOG



Dominic Scott Kay has made twenty-three movies since he started his career, seven years ago, at the age of four. He is gap-toothed, big-eyed, and less *enfant terrible* than James James Morrison Morrison Weatherby George Dupree: he holds doors; thanks waitresses in a practiced singsong; is courteous to reporters ("Tell me if I'm talking too fast for you"). He is precocious, sure. "I started making my own plays, making little shows, when I was two," he said the other day, over a glass of water at the Malibu Inn. ("You need to drink lots of that!" his mother, Cindy, told him.) "I was so into creating and doing shows and entertaining. Even then, people were saying, 'You should get an agent, you should get into acting.' My first audition was 'Minority Report.' I was four then. I played Tom's son, and Steven directed me."

Last January, Kay outdid himself, in a classic Hollywood twofer—neighbor dispute meets battle over creative differences—when he filed suit in Malibu against Conroy Kanter, an aspiring actress and producer who lives near him and was a family friend. He was seeking control of his directorial début, a short film called "Saving Angelo." Kay's complaint—voice-over material—said, "This is a case about how the dream of being a 'player' in Hollywood brings out the worst in people." Kanter countered, in a cross-complaint, that Cindy Kay is "a 'stage mom' who dominates Dominic's life." The two sides settled last month: Kanter, who invested roughly eleven thousand dollars in the movie, got a producing credit. Kay got final cut.

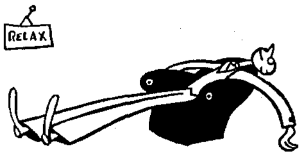
In "Saving Angelo," Kay—who was the voice of Wilbur in last year's movie version of "Charlotte's Web"—cast himself as a modern-day Fern Arable, rescuing a sick, unwanted dog and nursing it to health. The story is based on Kay's own experience of finding a comatose white boxer by the side of the road. He was in his car seat, headed to Vegas for a rock show. (His father plays drums for the Commodores.) "We've always rescued animals in our family," Kay said. "There's this dog on the side of the highway. Everyone is passing it by. They all think it's dead. We stopped. He was lying in a dried puddle of blood, his leg was fractured, and he wasn't moving at all." The Kays, who maintain a menagerie of ailing dogs, cats, and guinea pigs, took him in. They named him Angelo.

One day, at the Malibu Country Mart, a fireman started playing with Angelo. It turned out that one of the dogs at the firehouse had recently died, and when the Kays offered him Angelo he accepted. In Kay's film, the title role is played by a professional Aussie-Lab mix called Kuma, though the real Angelo has a cameo. Kevin Bacon plays the fireman. (In the rough cut, Kanter plays a veterinarian.) "I was six when I found Angelo, and when I was seven I did a movie with Kevin Bacon, right, where *he* directed *me*," Kay said. "I played Kyra's son," he added, referring to Kyra Sedgwick, who is married to Bacon. "Kevin and Kyra gave me a Palmcorder for the wrap because they knew I wanted to direct so much. I pitched him the story, and when I was nine I ended up directing it on 35mm. From the beginning, I always wanted to direct. This was just a great, touching story that happened to my family. It just hit the spot." Kay shot the movie in Malibu, in three days, and plans to donate any proceeds to an animal-rescue fund. "It was wild—me, who's always at soccer camp or doing regular-kid normal things, I get to direct a movie?" he said, with his hand on his heart. Then he discovered that his spoon and his knife were magnetically attracted to each other, and Cindy confiscated them.

Kay, in accordance with the terms of the settlement, declined to speak about the lawsuit. As for the movie, he said, with seasoned vagueness, "We're still editing it." His next short, which he is going to shoot this summer, is a three-generational family drama called "Grandpa's Cabin." After breakfast, Kay screened "Saving Angelo" on a portable DVD player in the back of Cindy's S.U.V. while she drove up a winding canyon road to the very fancy fire station—fountains, lawns, palms, and hibiscuses—where Angelo lives. "Duke! Duke!" Kay called as he got out of the car. (The fireman had renamed Angelo.) Eventually, Duke, a square-jawed, salty old boy with bloodshot eyes and a docked tail, came loping across the lawn. "Hi, Duke, hi, baby," Kay said, like any director greeting talent. Then he sat on the ground and received kisses from a thick pink tongue.

—Dana Goodyear

BENEFITS DEPT.
LIGHTS-OUT



Peter Workman, the founder and chief executive of Workman Publishing, is known among his employees as a stickler for traditional business hours: his editors are expected to be at their desks every morning at nine, an hour at which many in the industry are still spilling crumbs upon Michiko Kakutani. In January, though, the house published "Take a Nap! Change Your Life," a how-to and why-you-should, by Sara Mednick, which argues that napping increases productivity, improves health, and encourages weight loss, among other benefits. After it came out, Workman was persuaded that his own minions ought to be encouraged to fall asleep on the job.

"If it does work, why not us?" Workman said the other day in his office, whose bookshelves are filled with copies of "The Silver Palate Cookbook" and "1,000 Places to See Before You Die" and other books that his team had produced while not napping. Tie loosened and wire-rimmed glasses askew, Workman looked as if he had just woken up from a nap himself, but a can of Diet Coke and a jar of chocolate candies on his conference table testified to a dependence upon more traditional means of stimulation. (He has brought a pillow to the office but has yet to use it.)

His staff members have been more eager to enjoy a sanctioned slump, under the guidance of Mednick, a research scientist, who hopes to use data gathered at Workman to encourage other companies to adopt her program. Mike Vago, who works in the art department, said that, whether or not taking a five- or ten-minute nap every afternoon had improved his productivity, it had definitely improved his mood. Vago has been napping, on a company-provided yoga mat, in the designated nap area—a corner of the library that has been sectioned off by a shoji screen—and said that sleeping in semi-public did not bother him. "Sometimes I would wake up and find someone next to me," he said. "Not for the first time."

Other nappers have been seeking privacy in stockrooms. Janet Vicario, a graphic designer, claimed a copy-paper supply closet, which, though chilly, offered the advantage of a complete blackout experience; Jen Paré Neugeboren, the company's publicist, has been taking her naps in a closet full of books, which, she has found, provide a built-in wake-up call. "I can't last longer than twenty minutes because of the dust," she said. Susan Bolotin, the book's editor, was initially skeptical of her ability to take advantage of its instruction, even though she has an office with solid walls and a door. "I thought I was incapable of napping," she said. She has, however, developed a successful methodology: yoga mat, folded-up pashmina under the head, coat as a blanket, eye mask. And she admits that, now that she is taking a ten-minute refresher, she is less inclined to wander the halls aimlessly in midafternoon.

Ian Gross, who writes the company's contracts, said that it was too early to say whether Taking a Nap! has Changed His Life, but he asserted that it has changed his afternoons. "I don't feel that I need to get out of here at the end of the day," he said. Gross, who travels an hour and a half from New Jersey, sleeps on his stomach on a yoga mat in what might be called Tired Commuter Pose. He has a glass-fronted office that looks onto the corridor directly opposite Peter Workman's own glass-fronted office. He has been blocking the view with posters for "14,000 Things to Be Happy About," another of the company's titles—not, he explained, for fear of being caught not napping by the boss but on account of one of napping's side effects. "I don't want anyone to see me drool," he said.

—Rebecca Mead

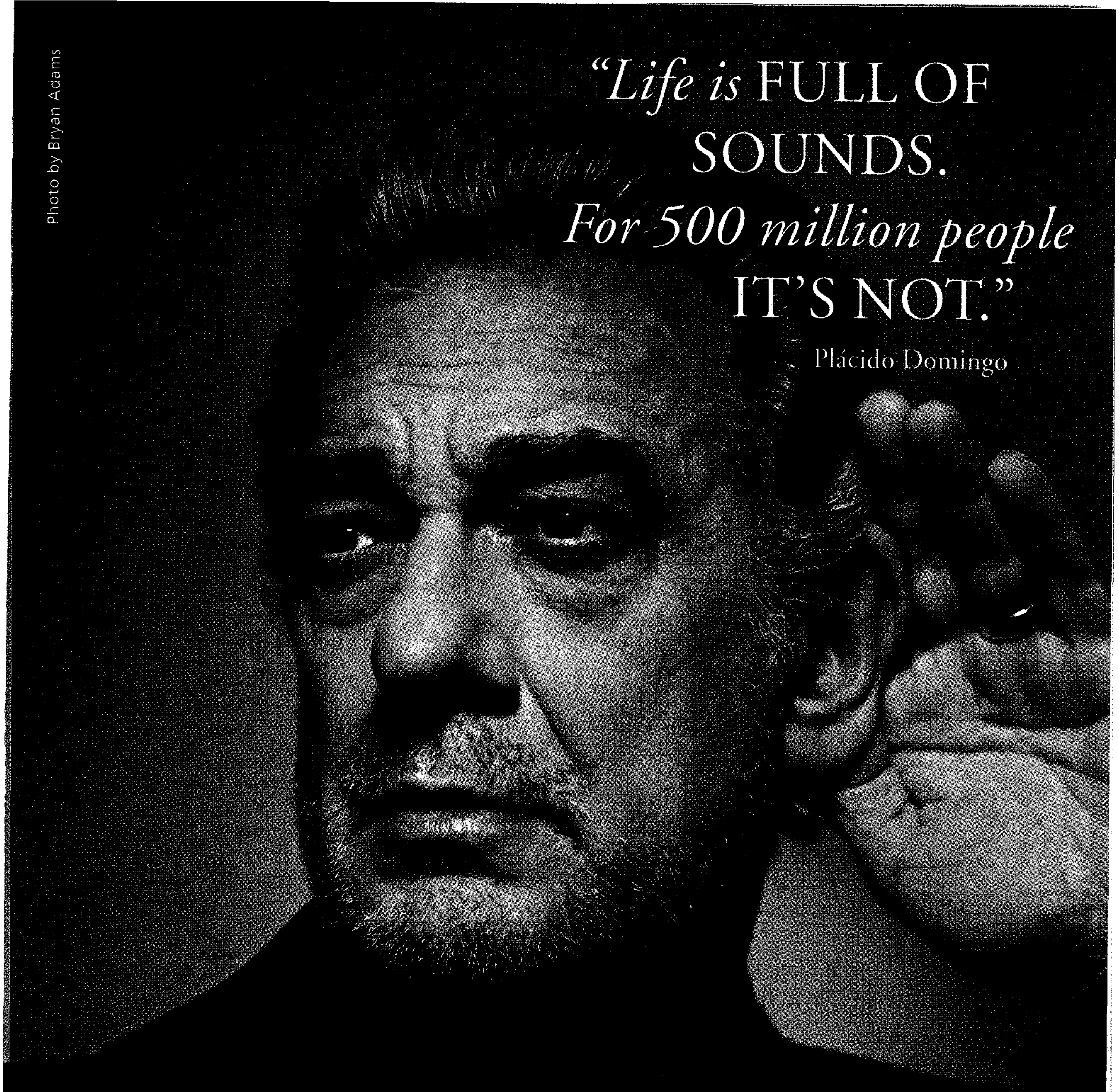

"*Life is* FULL OF SOUNDS.
For 500 million people IT'S NOT."
Plácido Domingo

Photo by Bryan Adams

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
A DRUG ON THE MARKET

Last month, a fierce and costly battle erupted over the diabetes drug Avandia after an article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggested that the drug raised the risk of a heart attack by forty-three per cent. In the publicity storm that ensued, the number of new Avandia prescriptions shrank by twenty-one per cent, and investors lopped more than twelve billion dollars off the market capitalization of the drug's maker, GlaxoSmithKline. Then came a furious backlash. The article's lead author, Steven Nissen, was accused of being a publicity-seeking crusader with a conflict of interest (Nissen had previously received research support from the maker of one of Avandia's competitors). GlaxoSmithKline dismissed Nissen's work, which was a meta-analysis of forty-two other studies, and published interim results from its own long-term study of Avandia's safety, which it claimed proved the drug to be no more dangerous than its competitors. There were complaints about the "tabloid" hype that journals attach to their stories, and the British medical journal *The Lancet* said that "alarmist headlines and confident declarations help nobody."

This kind of brouhaha, with volleys of personal attacks and fights for the biggest headline, doesn't look much like science. But it's all too typical of the way we measure the safety and efficacy of drugs. The U.S. has no rational system for "post-market surveillance"—the evaluation of drugs after they've been approved. Instead, oversight is left to a motley collection of altruists, academics, lawyers, self-publicists, and drug companies, who make their own arbitrary decisions about which drugs to study, how to evaluate them, and what risks to look for. Somehow, the truth is expected to rise to the surface from among all these competing interests and random decisions.

One might expect the Food and Drug Administration to bring order and rationality to this system. But the way the F.D.A. is configured and run prevents it from doing so. Before a drug has been approved, the F.D.A. has tremendous leverage over pharmaceutical companies, and can require them to do the studies that it deems necessary. As soon as the agency actually approves a drug for sale, though, its authority is markedly diminished. The agency can recommend that the manufacturer of a drug already on the market conduct studies, but it can't, with a few exceptions, force the company to do so. Furthermore, it can't fine companies that don't follow its recommendations, and it can't limit their advertising or sanction them in any real way. As a result, most post-market studies promised by drug companies have never been started, and, of those which have, nearly three-quarters remain incomplete.

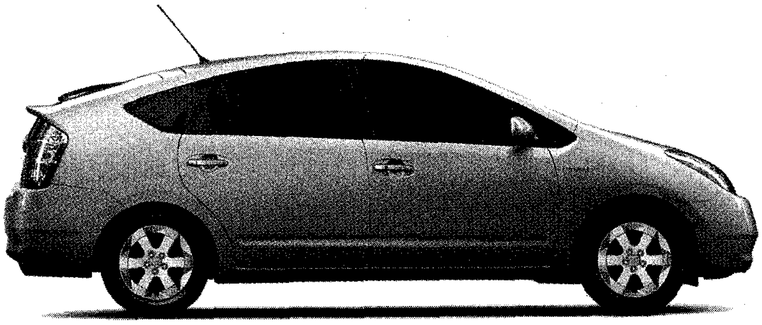
Instead of relying on drugmakers to test their own products, the agency could, in principle, run or commission its own trials. But it lacks both the money and the infrastructure to do so. While there is an office devoted to "surveillance and epidemiology," which is theoretically responsible for post-market monitoring, its budget is startlingly small, it does not function as an independent agency, and its recommendations are often overruled. The F.D.A. as a whole is far more focussed on what happens to drugs before they enter the market: for every seven employees who work on drug approval, only one works on post-market safety.

MARC ROSENTHAL

The result of all this is that the F.D.A. can't identify problems quickly and systematically. When the agency does instigate a post-market study of a drug, for instance, it's generally because of "adverse-event" reports from doctors and patients, like the accounts of serious skin reactions caused by the anti-arthritis drug Bextra. But most such reports deal with surprising problems that seem to be directly caused by a drug. More common problems, like heart attacks, often fall through the cracks, because they can have so many causes. As a result, the agency's ability to catch problems early usually comes down to chance. Adverse-event reporting didn't, for instance, uncover the negative effects of Vioxx; its coronary risks were discovered only because Merck, hoping to gain approval for a new use of the drug, happened to run some new studies. And had Nissen chosen to study a different drug no one would be talking about Avandia today.

Drug companies may like this haphazard system of surveillance, even if it leaves them exposed to the kind of publicity that Glaxo is currently enduring. For the rest of us, though, it's a bizarrely inefficient and confusing process, one that almost all consumers (and many doctors) are ill-equipped to navigate. Small government has its virtues, but providing information about the risks and efficacy of drugs is a classic public good—precisely the kind of service that government can best provide. This doesn't have to be cumbersome or expensive. One approach, which is followed in Europe, would be to require drugs to be reviewed again after five years, thereby forcing drugmakers to do the necessary post-market studies. And simply giving the F.D.A. the money it needed to run its own studies would make a big difference. (Congress is at long last taking small steps in this direction. For decades, lobbyists have helped defeat attempts to toughen the F.D.A.'s post-market authority, but the Senate just passed, and the House is now considering, a bill that would enhance the F.D.A.'s power.) A newly strengthened F.D.A. would not be perfect in its judgment, and it wouldn't usher in a utopian era of pharmaceutical safety—risks and side effects are unavoidable when it comes to drugs. But it would keep Americans far safer than relying on the benevolence of drug companies or the random choices of crusaders does. In this case, what we don't know really can hurt us.

—*James Surowiecki*



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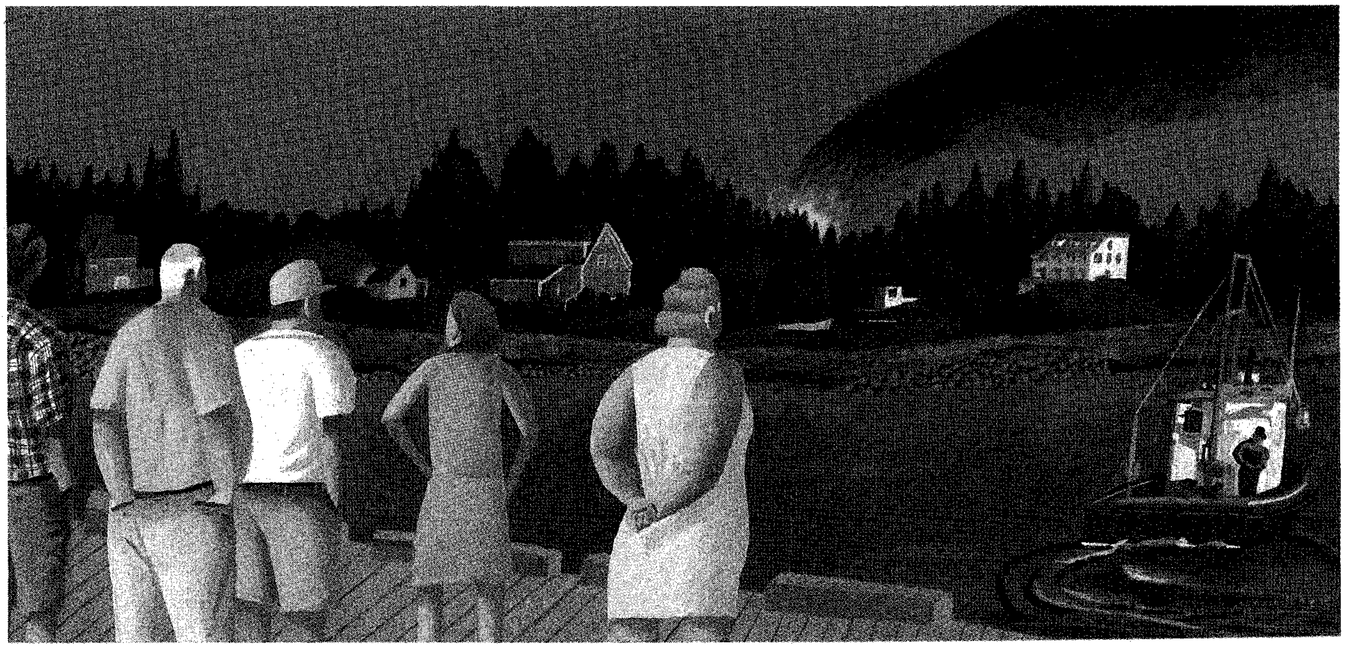
CANADA JOURNAL

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE WAY

On a quiet island, all hell broke loose.

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

The residents of Cedar Street, a thinly settled road on the island of Grand Manan, would not have considered Ronnie Ross an ideal neighbor even if they hadn't believed that he was running a crack house. Ross was a slim, sporadically belligerent man in his early forties who had grown up in Nova Scotia and had worked from time to time on Grand Manan lobster boats. He was a devotee of loud music and powerful speakers—both sometimes left on, the neighbors had come to believe, even if nobody happened to be home. He often seemed high on something. Carter Foster, a burly young fisherman who lived across the road with his girlfriend, Sara Wormell, has recalled that one of the first conversations he had with Ross—about two years ago, a few months after Ross moved into 61 Cedar—began with Ross stating that he could see people up in the trees behind his house. Erin Gaskill, who lived with her two small children in the house next to Ross's, once saw Ross take a two-by-four and smash all the windows of a car parked in his driveway—a car that apparently belonged to his girlfriend. The people who congregated at Ross's were a rowdy lot. The neighborhood children were so reluctant to walk past the house that the school-bus stop was moved so they wouldn't have to. Laura Buckley, the proprietor of the Inn at Whale Cove Cottages, who is known on the island for tart speech, recently summed up Ronnie Ross this way: "He had asshole issues that were much larger than just being a drug dealer."



A scholar who summers on Grand Manan says, "Unpopular groups are often driven off island by fire."

MARK ULRIKSEN

The calm assumption that some people are just drug dealers is a phenomenon of recent decades on Grand Manan, which lies off the southeast coast of New Brunswick, in the Bay of Fundy. There are older people who remember the days when someone who wanted nothing more than a bottle of beer was faced with a trip to the mainland on the ferry, which runs to Blacks Harbour, New Brunswick, twenty miles away. Grand Manan always had more than its share of churches that take a stern view of drinking and carrying on. Whenever the question of opening a liquor store on Grand Manan was being debated in the provincial capital, an islander in his sixties said recently, so many stalwart Christians were so eager to testify in the negative that casual travellers to the mainland couldn't find space on the ferry. On the other hand, he added, there have always been a lot of people who believe that "the good Lord can't see you once you get past Blacks Harbour."

Although the needs of whale watchers and birders and people with vacation cottages provide some employment in the summer, most people on Grand Manan make their living from the sea, in jobs whose rigors and dangers predispose them to a robust celebration of, say, the arrival of Saturday night. From November through June, Grand Mananers haul lobster traps out of the frigid waters of the Bay of Fundy. Starting in the spring, some of them, including Carter Foster, tend weirs—graceful structures that look like Richard Serra sculptures made of telephone poles and netting, and which somehow trap herring. Some drag for scallops or sea urchins. Some work as divers, maintaining the nets used in salmon farms or weirs. Some "wrinkle"—gather periwinkles from the rocks at low tide—or collect and dry dulse, a seaweed that is edible, or at least considered so in the Canadian Maritimes.

Grand Manan experienced a boom in the nineties, but in recent years there have been some economic reversals. The aquaculture industry, which had disease problems, has greatly shrunk. Two years ago, a large sardine factory closed down. A federal program to buy fishing licenses and turn them over to Indian tribes eventually drove the cost of a boat and a lobster license so high that young islanders found it difficult to enter the field as proprietors. Still, someone just out of high school can make a considerable amount of money in the fisheries if he's willing to work hard. There is not much to spend it on. Grand Manan is seventeen miles long. Since virtually nobody lives on what residents call the back of the island—the imposing cliffs whose shade helps produce high-quality dulse—just about all the houses and businesses are close to the one main road, officially New Brunswick Route 776, which runs from North Head through Grand Harbour to Seal Cove. Given the wait for the ferry and the drive on the mainland to St. John, New Brunswick's largest city, it's a three-hour trip to the bright lights. Activities for young people who aren't interested in church functions have always been in short supply on Grand Manan and so have drug-prevention programs. In the view of the Regional Crown Prosecutor, James McAvity, who is based in St. John, Grand Manan has almost laboratory conditions for a serious drug problem.

In the late sixties, a liquor store finally came to the island, and it wasn't long before liquor was supplanted by marijuana and hashish, as it was in small communities all over the Maritimes. Grand Mananers who came of age in that period are likely to be undisturbed by the sight of a fisherman lighting up a joint. That tolerance wavers around cocaine and tends not to extend to crack. People said they'd heard that Ronnie Ross was not simply selling crack but selling it to schoolchildren, and they wondered why he was never arrested. Law enforcement on Grand Manan is in the hands of a four-officer detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Mountie who concentrated on drug enforcement had spent hours watching Ross's place from Carter Foster's or Erin Gaskill's. A search warrant to go through Ross's premises was executed, but the evidence required for a charge wasn't found. One community activist thought of organizing a sort of mothers' vigil in front of 61 Cedar to monitor the comings and goings, until she heard that Ross kept some particularly nasty dogs. Someone posted a sign, quickly torn down, warning people who turned off Route 776 onto Cedar Street that they were about to drive down a block that held a crack house. As time went on, Ross seemed to grow more brazen. "People on the wrong side of the law usually keep a low profile," a councillor in the Grand Manan village government said recently, in discussing Ronnie Ross. "He made himself out to be this big-time gangster."

The big-time-gangster image was fed by having plenty of visitors from the mainland. Grand Mananers are not as wary of people from away as they might have been in the days when just about everyone on the island seemed to belong to one of the families that had been there for generations. In recent years, there has been turnover in the population. Some young people, like a lot of other young people from Atlantic Canada, have moved to British Columbia, which has an appealing climate, or to Alberta, which has appealing wages. (Carter Foster and Sara Wormell, who are in their twenties, had been thinking about a move to British Columbia themselves.) Some Newfoundlanders who came to work in the sardine factory or the salmon farms have remained. But the mainland still represents dangers that don't exist on an island of twenty-five hundred people. Stolen goods, which would be recognized in a community as small as Grand Manan, can easily be fenced on the mainland, for instance, and last summer more people reported missing property—especially power tools. It was rumored that the stolen goods were being taken by Ronnie Ross's crowd, or being accepted by Ross as payment for drugs. One of Ross's regular visitors, Terry Irvine, a young man from St. John, drove a G.M.C. Jimmy, and some people on Grand Manan began to see the Jimmy as a way of carrying stolen goods off the

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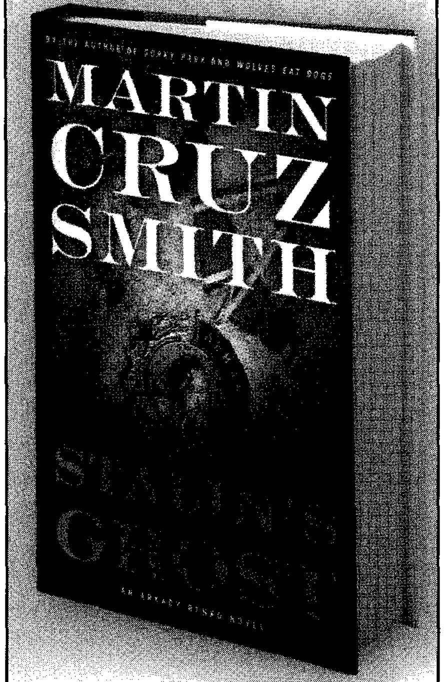

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island and bringing drugs on. The stealing seems to have caused at least as much anger on Grand Manan as any drug dealing. "That's where it changed, I guess," Carter Foster later told the R.C.M.P. "When stuff started getting stolen." On the first weekend of July last year—the long Canada Day weekend, which is roughly equivalent to the Fourth of July—Irvine's G.M.C. Jimmy, parked in Ronnie Ross's driveway, was destroyed by fire.

Ross accused Carter Foster, among others, of having burned Irvine's S.U.V. Foster pointed out that he hadn't even been on the island at the time of the fire. That assertion had no effect on Ross, who told Foster and Sarah Wormell that they had better sleep with their eyes open, because "a flaming ball of fire is going to come through your window." That evening, Ross piled some wooden palettes in his front yard, right next to the street, put a couple of propane tanks on top of the pile, started a fire, and, according to Foster, said that he was going to blow up the entire neighborhood. The R.C.M.P. constables who put the fire out were told by Ross that people at a community meeting had decided to burn his house down. During the next few weeks, various accusations were exchanged, including a claim by Ross that, even before the car fire, someone had thrown a propane tank through his living-room window. R.C.M.P. Constable Gerald Bigger had what sounds like a rather typical confrontation, in which Ross went from obscene gestures and obscene language to picking up a large rock and saying, according to the constable's report:

> "I ought to drive this through you." I pulled my side arm from my holster, placed it by my side and told him if he raised the rock in my direction he'd be shot. Ronald threw the rock down. He continued to yell, call names and swear. Then, as quick as it started it was over. Ronald jumped across the ditch, said he didn't like to be called a loser or laughed at. I told him that I didn't like to be called names. He said he only called me the names because he thought that I didn't like him. Ronald also accused me of conspiring with the community to burn him out. I told him that I wasn't part of any conspiracy and that I wasn't aware of any community meeting to burn him out. Before leaving, Ronald shook my hand and invited [me] to drop by his place anytime for a drink.

A lot of rumors went around the island, many of them about who might arrive from the mainland and what they intended to do to avenge the burning of Irvine's S.U.V. On Grand Manan, some rumor enhancement is taken for granted. It has always been said that if hailstones the size of mothballs start to fall in North Head they're the size of icebergs by the time the story reaches Seal Cove. Some of the rumors, though, were disturbingly specific. Larry Marshall, a wrinkler and dulse-gatherer, heard that Ross was importing people from the mainland to burn eight or ten houses, with Carter Foster's house at the top of the hit list. Marshall's brother, Harold, whom he customarily describes as "a bag of trouble with a capital 'T,' " hung around with Ross. The two of them, Larry Marshall told Foster, were "planning to have people come from away with dynamite and machine guns." A volunteer fireman later told the R.C.M.P., "I heard . . . that Ronnie Ross had some of his friends come down, supposedly from the Hell's Angels." It was said that on July 21st, a Friday, ten thugs were going to be arriving from St. John in an S.U.V., presumably the vehicle that would take them around to the houses on their hit list. The estimate quickly grew to twenty.

Not long after midnight on that Friday night, Constable Bigger stopped by Carter Foster's house. By that time, there were thirty or forty men in Foster's yard. A number of them were, in Foster's words, people "who'd had something stolen and knew where it went." Some were people who had come from a baseball game and were still in their uniforms. Some were older men who were saying that Carter Foster and his neighbors oughtn't to put up with Ronnie Ross. Constable Bigger informed Foster that the rumor about twenty hoodlums arriving from the mainland wasn't true. Irvine's new vehicle, a white G.M.C. Yukon, had been stopped by the R.C.M.P. when it left the ferry and had turned out to contain only three men and no weapons. Foster told Bigger that he had, in fact, spotted the three men at Ross's. According to the constable's report, Foster said that if the crowd at 61 Cedar started something, he and his friends were going to finish it. Sara Wormell, a polite young woman who likes to take photographs and keep journals, had put her dog and some family papers and favorite photographs in her car. "I thought for sure our house was going to be burnt down," she later said.

The talk on both sides of houses being burned down would have come as no surprise to one summer resident—Marc Shell, the Irving Babbitt Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard, who recently completed research for a book called "Grand Manan; or, a Short History of North America." Shell concluded that on Grand Manan, which has always been lightly policed by officers sent from the mainland, "unpopular groups are often driven off island by fire" and "sometimes the only form of law enforcement is illegal police-enforced banishment." As far back as 1839, for instance, the Episcopal church was destroyed by fire, and any question about whether the blaze had been started by what a church statement called "a sacrilegious incendiary" was settled by a note at the scene containing, according to the same statement, "language which betokens premeditated malevolence and hostility against the Bishop of the Diocese, against the Rector of this Parish in particular, and four other persons of this County." All of the men brought to trial for the arson were acquitted.

"The idea was to put the fear of God in 'em, get 'em on the boat, and get 'em the hell off the island," a lifelong Grand Mananer said recently. "But it got out of hand." On Friday the twenty-first, Erin Gaskill was told that she might want to have her children sleep over at their grandmother's that evening. According to later court testimony, there had been hints, or perhaps more than hints, from the R.C.M.P. that calls involving Ronnie Ross would not draw a swift response. For a while, the people in Foster's yard seemed less like a group of aroused citizens than like a bunch of men attending a barbecue. Accounts of what happened when the trouble started are imprecise. It was dark. People on both sides of Cedar Street had been drinking. It's clear that the sides were not evenly matched—there were fewer than a dozen people at Ross's—and were not cleanly divided between outsiders and islanders. Some of the people at Ross's house were from Grand Manan and a few of the people on Carter Foster's side of the street may at times have tempered their outrage at drug dealers with a few purchases of their own. It's clear that at one point some of the men on Foster's side were carrying bats, and at least one of Ross's crew had a knife taped to a pole. Shortly after midnight, Carter Foster and several companions moved into Cedar Street to confront the men who had come out of Ross's house. "You're going to fucking get off the island!" Foster shouted at Ross. He and Ross began to fight. Foster, who was winning, had Ross in a choke hold when the shooting started.

The shots seemed to be coming from Ross's house. Foster let go of Ross, went back to his own house, and got his rifle—a high-powered sniper model that he is licensed to use on seals that get into the herring weirs. He climbed onto the roof and started shooting at the white Yukon parked in Ross's driveway. He fired at least once at Ross's porch light. "People in my group were saying, 'Shoot the shooter,' " Foster later told the R.C.M.P. "I can't do that. I couldn't even put a person in my sights. . . . So I proceeded to shoot the vehicle to disable it for our own protection, so they wouldn't take off and get out of there. And, at the same time this was all going off, some people on our side had rocket flares, pistol flares, different things like that." The exchange of gunfire went on for five or ten minutes. Remarkably, no one was hit by a bullet, although Ross was struck in the leg by a flare. By the time the three available R.C.M.P. officers arrived, the shooting had stopped and no one was in the street. Later, though, fights broke out that the Mounties seemed powerless to stop. Both Ross and Irvine were beaten up. At some point, a couple of young men from Foster's side of the street circled around behind Ross's house, poured out some fuel, and tossed in a match. Flames shot out the back wall, and the people inside the house rushed out the front door.

When the Grand Manan volunteer fire company arrived, the firefighters figured that they might have to reserve one of their hoses to protect themselves, since they could hear shouts of "Let it burn!" and "Off the island!" Rocks were falling near the firefighting equipment. Eventually, the firefighters were satisfied that the blaze was out and they returned to the fire hall. Ross and some of his friends were escorted away by the R.C.M.P., leaving the house empty. Then, at four-thirty or five in the morning, there were explosions inside the house and it burst into flames. When the firefighters arrived this time, they encountered a pickup truck parked across Cedar Street to bar their entry. After that had been cleared away, the fire trucks were blocked by half a dozen people, including Sara Wormell, linking hands across the road. Sooner or later, the firemen were allowed through, but it was too late. Ronnie Ross's house was beyond saving.

Canada was startled. There were headlines across the country about the normally serene fishing community of Grand Manan—in the normally law-abiding country of Canada—having resorted to vigilantism. Crown Prosecutor McAvity moved swiftly to bring charges against those who had broken the law, partly to demonstrate that the authorities were not going to tolerate what he called mob rule. The R.C.M.P. was not able to find out who had set the fire that actually destroyed Ronnie Ross's house, and Crown prosecutors eventually decided not to charge the people who had blocked the fire trucks or egged on the crowd. But five young men who worked in the fisheries were taken to jail on the mainland—arrested for offenses that could potentially lead to terms in the penitentiary. Two of the defendants were charged with having set the earlier fire, and three, including Carter Foster, were charged with participating in the shooting. (Ronnie Ross was charged with the same firearms violation and with having issued the fireball threat to Carter Foster and Sara Wormell.) A week or

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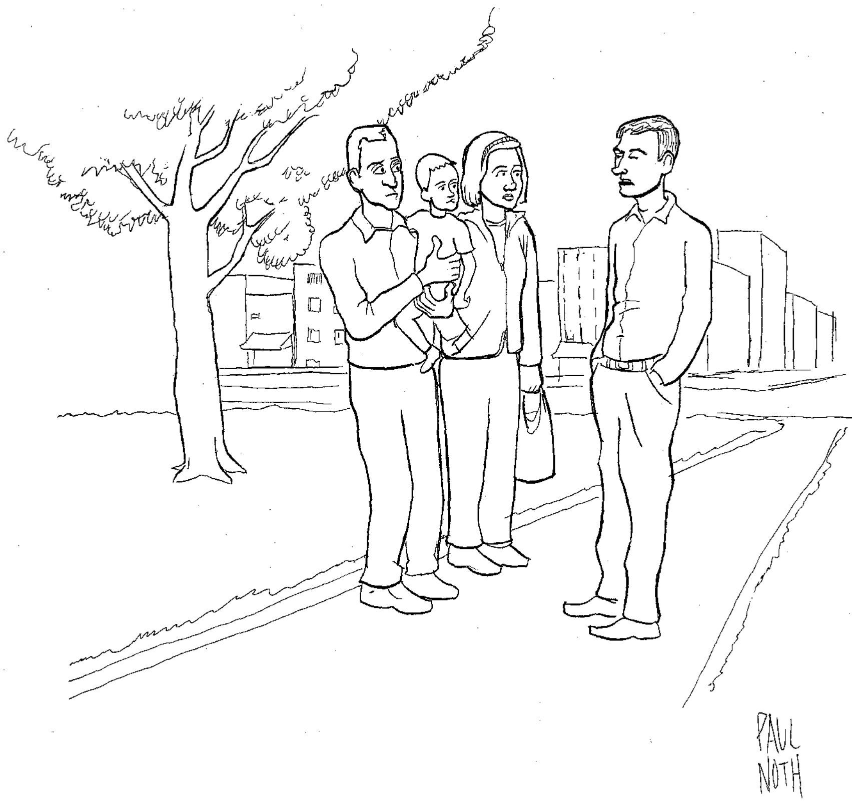


"Sorry, but 'cute' isn't a word I just throw around."

so after the incident, the R.C.M.P., apparently acting on tips that another person suspected of dealing drugs might be burned out, sent seventy officers to Grand Manan—a show of force that mainly just irritated the islanders. The mayor of Grand Manan, Dennis Greene, asked for an investigation of the R.C.M.P., which he claimed had spent a hundred thousand dollars on an after-the-fact invasion after years of saying that it didn't have a few thousand dollars in the budget to put a drug-sniffing dog on the ferry.

Overwhelmingly, islanders rejected the notion that the five incarcerated men were criminals. A sign went up at the ferry terminal in Grand Manan saying "Free Our Heroes." All around the island, red ribbons were displayed to show solidarity with the defendants, who came to be known on Grand Manan as The Boys. A public meeting called by the R.C.M.P. to hear residents' concerns turned into a dressing down of the police for lax drug enforcement and a pep rally for The Boys. When David Lutz, a New Brunswick criminal lawyer, went to the island to meet with some people about representing The Boys, he was asked what sort of retainer he'd need. He said twenty thousand dollars. The next evening, as he sat in his car waiting to get on the seven-o'clock ferry back to Blacks Harbour, a man he'd never met before handed him an envelope with cash and checks totalling just about twenty thousand dollars. The fund-raising efforts eventually included bake sales and the sale of T-shirts. The father of one defendant said later, "How many criminals are there that the community pays their legal bills?"

In November, when the trial of The Boys got under way on the mainland, a county weekly, the *Saint Croix Courier*, asked its readers about their sympathies, and eighty-two per cent of the respondents said that they backed the defendants. "These five men did what Mr. McAvity just said that they did," David Lutz said in his opening statement, after the Crown prosecutor had outlined what the jury would hear. "The issue is why they did what they did that night." Lutz's strategy was based on necessity: all five of the defendants, under videotaped R.C.M.P. questioning, had admitted their roles in the gunfire or the arson. As the defense presented it, "They acted out of fear for their lives and the lives of others." Lutz portrayed the gathering at Carter Foster's house as a sort of "mobile neighborhood watch" that went "horribly wrong" when shots began coming from Ross's house.

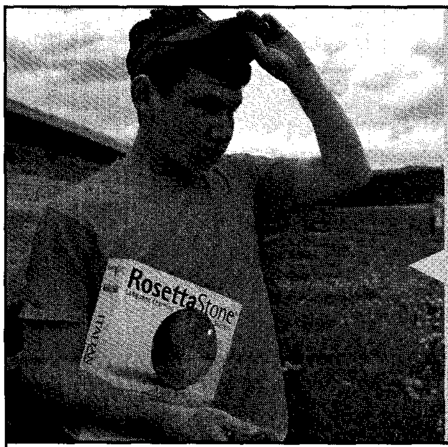
If the crowd had gathered for the "peaceful intervention" that Lutz described, the Crown prosecutors replied, how come there were rifles at the ready? And what, they asked, does setting fire to someone's house have to do with self-defense? Although "the Crown is not here to support Mr. Ross's life style," Crown Prosecutor Randy DiPaolo said, the defendants "do not get an exemption from the criminal-justice system because they're fishermen or because they work hard."

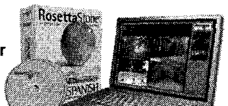
Ronnie Ross's record, introduced into evidence, reflected that before he moved to Grand Manan he was convicted of crimes like extortion and assault. He had never been convicted of selling drugs, though, and there was only sketchy testimony about drug dealing at 61 Cedar Street—most of it concerning Terry Irvine. Ross admitted using crack, but, like Irvine, he denied being a dealer. When Lutz asked him why he bought so much baking soda, an ingredient of crack ("You're not a baker, are you? You don't make cookies and muffins"), Ross said that he used it to deodorize his refrigerator. The one person Ross identified as having been at 61 Cedar Street while crack was being smoked was one of the men on trial for trying to burn the place down because it was a crack house. Ross, who had testified that he'd lived on Grand Manan for ten years, said that the assumption that he was a crack dealer was caused by prejudice against outsiders: "Islanders stick together. If one person doesn't like you, no one likes you. They gossip and stories get twisted around." As for any plans to travel around in the Yukon burning down houses on a hit list, Ross's friends testified that they had gathered at his house that night for their usual Friday-night pastime of getting drunk or getting high. Terry Irvine, who, according to some witnesses, may have fired the first shot, testified that he'd been too drunk to remember much of anything about the evening.

The jury found those who admitted to shooting guns that night not guilty—in his charge, the judge had said "the law doesn't require somebody to run to the woods if they are being attacked"—but it found the two arson defendants guilty. Foster was also found guilty of the minor charge of unsafe storage of weapons, and another defendant was found guilty of firing a flare gun. The verdicts were not popular. There were tears in the courtroom, and the mood on the ferry going back to the island was sombre. The reaction softened a bit when, without objection from the Crown prosecutor, the judge handed down lenient sentences; the most severe, for the arsonists, included a form of house arrest. Editorialists tended to detect a sensible Canadian compromise between the requirements of lawfulness and mercy. "The island people were well satisfied that they didn't go to jail," one resident said recently. "If those boys had gone to jail for a year, I'd be scared to say what might have happened."

A country song about The Boys has been posted on the Internet: "They were known as The Boys. And they were fishermen. Cared about their families. They cared about their friends. Looked out for the neighbors. Out on Grand Manan. They were known as The Boys. And they were fishermen." Some Grand Mananers, including some of those who were willing to contribute to the defense fund, feel a bit uneasy about The Boys' being portrayed as the equivalent of the peaceful farmers in a Western who finally rise up against the gunslingers hired by the wicked cattle baron. "They weren't exactly the churchgoing crowd," one islander said recently. There are, of course, some people on Grand Manan who have never felt even enough solidarity with The Boys to accept the term. ("They're not boys. They're grown men.") Some volunteer firemen, for instance, were shocked at the scene on Cedar Street that night; they are understandably accustomed to a different reception when they show up, at some risk and for no pay, to save a neighbor's house. "You can't carry out vigilante justice," one of them said not long ago. "If the drug dealers had had more people, Foster's home would have been burnt out." Such opinions, though, tend to be expressed privately.

By now, most of the red ribbons, many of them bleached pink by the harsh Maritime winter, have been taken down. Among the last to go were three or four bright-red towels that until recently were still draped around trees in the front yard of Carter Foster and Sara Wormell. They have decided to stay in Grand Manan for the time being, although they'd like to figure out a way to spend some of the winter months in British Columbia. By this time of year, tall stakes driven into the ocean floor have been connected with netting, a process sometimes called "suiting your





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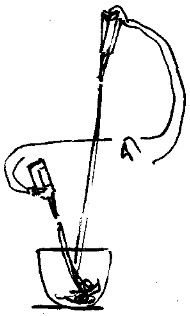
weirs," and people like Foster are getting up at a quarter to five every morning hoping to find the nets full of herring. The shed in back of their house has been repainted, but Foster can put his fingers in two bullet holes. At times, he has said that he wished he hadn't been present on the night of the fights and the gunfire and the house-burning. He calls the twenty days he spent in jail awaiting bail the worst twenty days of his life. ("To me, that would have been a good enough sentence if I had done something really horrific.") He has said that he's haunted by the thought that he could have been killed or that he could have killed somebody else. On the other hand, he thinks that some good has come of the altercation with Ronnie Ross. "They're talking about a center for the young people, and a paintball field," Foster said recently. "There's going to be some recreation for the young kids. The *only* recreation I had growing up was to go get drunk."



Many islanders would agree with Carter Foster that Grand Manan is better off than it was before he and Ronnie Ross met in the middle of Cedar Street—or will be if the grants that the village has applied for come through. That opinion is often followed by "Of course, I don't condone violence," but it also might be followed by the observation that a smarter way to get rid of someone like Ronnie Ross would be to wait until he was out of the house some dark night, drop in a Molotov cocktail, and "run off into the woods like a rabbit." Although there are still drug dealers on the island, none of them are outsiders who make themselves out to be big-time gangsters. There seems to be more focus on doing something about the drug problem. People have the impression that burglaries have fallen. They are relieved that Terry Irvine is no longer making regular visits in one S.U.V. or another—even though no evidence was ever presented that Irvine and Ross were behind the thefts. In fact, Irvine is in jail. This spring, in St. John, he pleaded guilty to stealing several thousand dollars' worth of goods from three Atlantic Superstores, in full view of surveillance cameras—committing what his own lawyer summed up as "a rather stupid offense."

And Ronald Ross is no longer a menacing presence on Grand Manan. His house is gone. Where it stood, there is simply an empty lot with some charred rubble. People see the end of his Grand Manan sojourn in varying ways. The Crown prosecutors believe, of course, that a mob put itself in the place of legally constituted authorities, while most residents of Grand Manan prefer to believe that islanders, regrettably, had to do what the R.C.M.P. seemed unwilling or unable to do. If it is true that the R.C.M.P. offered to turn a blind eye or even encouraged the violence, the legally constituted authorities could be said to have used the islanders as an unregulated auxiliary to get rid of Ronnie Ross. One resident of Cedar Street told the R.C.M.P. that, despite all the talk of drug problems, the eruption of violence was essentially part of a "personal war" between Ross and his neighbors—another way of saying that what really got Ronnie Ross put off Grand Manan was what Laura Buckley called his "asshole issues."

At Ross's trial in April, he was found guilty of the "ball of fire" threat but not guilty on the gun charge. (The judge, who heard the case without a jury, said that in his opinion the islanders at Foster's assembled not for a peaceful intervention but in the hope that something would start so that they could finish it.) Ross, who had been confined to his father's house in Nova Scotia since the previous summer, was sentenced to time served. After the sentencing, he told reporters that he might go back to Grand Manan once he is no longer prohibited from returning by the terms of his probation. A lot of people took that as just more Ronnie Ross bravura—when Mayor Greene was asked about it recently, he laughed—but Laura Buckley says that some people who know Ross believe that "he will actually have the brass balls to return." Being an outsider and presumably not a student of history, after all, he may not realize that, in Marc Shell's formulation, he has been banished. ◆

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

FRENCH BLUES

Edith Piaf's life in song.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

A tiny creature possessed of a power disproportionate to its size, or to its significance in the hierarchy of creation, figures in folktales the world over. It is sometimes a cricket or a mouse. In the folklore of France, it is *une piaf*, the argot for sparrow. Edith Piaf's tremendous voice surged from a stunted body. She considered herself hopelessly ugly, yet her rag-doll features had the same radiance that her sound did. It came, in part, from the friction between raw grief and joy which produced her vibrato. She planted her feet at a microphone as if it were a stake or a mast and she was about to be either burned at it or swept away. Destitution was her great theme, and she knew it in all its guises, so she never withheld. Her mouth and eyes dramatized her weary defiance of life's blows, but with her mothlike hands, which flickered or swooned or seemed to be caressing her own breasts, she let go.

Piaf, with flowers, returning to Paris from the United States in 1948.

RUE DES ARCHIVES/GRANGER COLLECTION

Piaf is probably the best-known and best-loved popular singer in French history, and one of the few to become a household name in America. She made ten concert tours of the United States, appeared eight times on "The Ed Sullivan Show," and twice played Carnegie Hall. Her records sold forty million copies in her lifetime, and she composed many of her own lyrics, including those to "Hymne à l'Amour" and "La Vie en Rose," which was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1998. "She is an inimitable genius," Jean Cocteau wrote. "There has never been an Edith Piaf before, and there will never be another."

Cocteau also wrote "Le Bel Indifférent," a play for and about Piaf and an atypical lover, the patrician aesthete Paul Meurisse (whose part was entirely mute). Piaf's affairs were legion, and she generally preferred roguish he-men who would rough her up a little, although she roughed them up in her own fashion, and she once threw a party for all the ex-"Mr. Piaf"s willing to attend—a crowded roomful. The tumultuous melodrama of her unprivate life has been chronicled in scores of biographies and films, which tend to be as unreliable as their subject's autobiographies. There was, however, one fact that no one could embroider or dispute, least of all Piaf. "I've had an irresistible need to destroy myself," she said, shortly before she died, in 1963, at the age of forty-seven, ravaged by malnutrition, alcoholism, morphine addiction, ulcers, tuberculosis, pancreatitis, hepatitis, rheumatoid arthritis, and, ultimately, cancer. It was the year of the Beatles' first LP.

My seventh-grade French teacher at a Queens public school, M. Swirsky, was among Piaf's most ardent fans on this side of the Atlantic. The boys laughed at his Friday ritual of donning a beret to signify that Piaf Hour, our weekly singalong to one of his cherished albums, had arrived. We couldn't have understood what those gritty and wanton love songs really meant, and they probably wouldn't now be judged edifying for twelve-year-olds. But Piaf herself was the size of a twelve-year-old—about four feet eight inches—and she never outgrew a child's magical thinking, or a wayward adolescent's bravado.

Piaf Hour included a diction lesson. Her native language was the harsh nasal vulgate of the Paris slums, but the clarity of her musical phrasing was the model that M. Swirsky drilled into us, just as one of her early Pygmalions, the impresario and lyricist Raymond Asso, had drilled it into her, and as she drilled it into Yves Montand, Eddie Constantine, Gilbert Bécaud, Georges Moustaki, and

Charles Aznavour, among countless protégés, most of them her consorts. *"Je n'suis qu'une . . . ombre de la rue,"* she sings in "Milord" ("I'm nothing but a backstreet shadow"). It's the wry sales pitch of a waif beckoning to a lonely British sex tourist, but it's also a perfect exercise for beginners—even if French labial gymnastics feel vaguely obscene when you're not used to them. Piaf, who was prone to fits of hysterical laughter, was never embarrassed about making a spectacle of herself in polite company with drunken ebullience or pugnacity, and, as the daughter of an itinerant contortionist, who spent some of her formative years living in her grandmother's brothel, she must have, by puberty, seen pretty much everything one can do with a mouth. That knowledge is in her voice. Yet its crystalline vibrancy defies the murky pathos of her story.

CRONUS

1.
We'll say, late at night, or just before it is dawn:
If only God knew how awful it is we'll feel,
surely, then, God wouldn't make us suffer as horribly as this.

Though, perhaps, after all, God doesn't know the whole of our tale.
Or, perhaps, after all, God is powerless, too,
or, perhaps, God is simply the God deep within us . . .

Yes, so deep within us, God is
what it is we'll suffer, as well.

2.
Brecht wrote, in old age, a little poem
about happiness, which, he confessed,
had eluded him all of his life.

And so he stated wryly, if pitifully:
It had better hurry up, at last,
if happiness, you know, is ever to be mine,

because, you see, so little time, of course, is left.

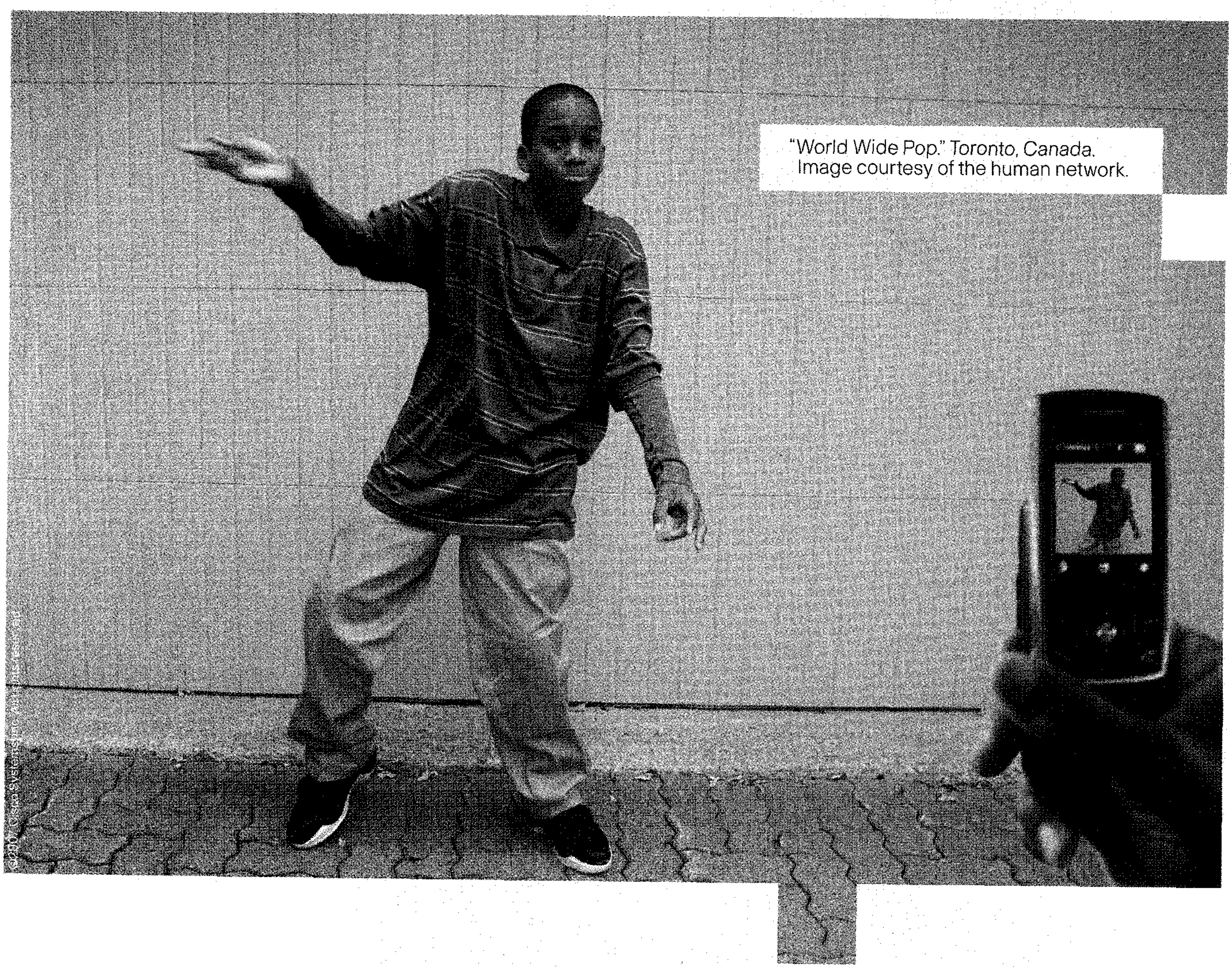
—*Robert Mazzocco*

Piaf was as much a phoenix as a sparrow. She returned after her periodic fugues, car crashes, breakdowns, and operations to sing more soulfully than before. The makers of her latest film biography, "La Vie en Rose," directed by Olivier Dahan and starring Marion Cotillard, are betting that she can rise again. If they are right, the triumph will belong primarily to Cotillard, who almost persuades you that you are watching Piaf herself. Were she alone on a bare stage, synching not only her lips but her every fibre to Piaf's, the movie might be a masterpiece rather than a pedestrian saga about a pop star's rise and fall. It isn't the fault of the stylish photography, or the cast of virtuosos, including Catherine Allégret (a ringer for her late mother, Simone Signoret), as Piaf's paternal grandmother, or Gérard Depardieu, as Louis Leplée—the Teddy-bearish homosexual who owned Gerny's, a voguish cabaret, and who discovered Piaf as a rachitic nineteen-year-old hellion singing on a street corner. But subtle acting can't save a script that resorts at nearly every turn to a visual cliché: the childhood of picturesque squalor; the picaresque adolescence; the montage of rave reviews rolling off an old-fashioned printing press that gives way to the scene of a trashed hotel suite.

Timing, however, is as critical to a film's prospects as to a singer's art, and Dahan's homage to Piaf opened in France on Valentine's Day, at an opportune moment. The country was preoccupied with its upcoming Presidential elections, and national identity was a central issue in the campaign, as it has been since the Revolution. For millions of her compatriots, Piaf and her music, *la chanson réaliste*—a Gallic version of the blues made popular at the turn of the last century by melancholy music-hall artists like Aristide Bruant and Yvette Guilbert—define what it means to be French.

Coasting on a wave of anxious, sentimental nationalism that crossed party lines, Dahan's film launched a Piaf craze that crossed generational lines. "France loves desperate love songs," Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a former Prime Minister under Jacques Chirac, who was endorsing Nicolas Sarkozy, told the press, adding that Piaf symbolized the desire of ordinary voters for a return to "real values" and the rejection of "élitism." The assertion itself is untranslatable to another culture. (Imagine Karl Rove making the same claim for Billie Holiday.) And while none of Sarkozy's rivals thought to invoke the "real values" of a profligate alcoholic millionaire, nobody demurred.

In France, a realist tends to be a former romantic mocking his lost illusions but also secretly mourning them. Jacques Brel and Georges Brassens are of that dark school. Like them, Piaf was too worldly and bruised to escape the ironic view that gives her art its depth and modernity, and experience taught her that most love isn't true. What she steadfastly refuses to renounce is her belief in loving. As for the reality of history or politics, Piaf does not seem to have given them a second thought, despite having entertained French prisoners of war in Nazi Germany (a fact you will not learn from "La Vie en Rose," which tacks back and forth from Piaf's death to her birth, in 1915, docking like a cruise ship at various colorful destinations in between, but giving the war years a pass). She is, nonetheless, that quintessential heroine of the Republic—a daughter of the people. No one can belt out "La Marseillaise" as stirringly as she. Her name, figure, accent, and legend—even her backstage hobby, knitting for her men—embody an ideal of heroic-underdog populism sacred to



"World Wide Pop." Toronto, Canada.
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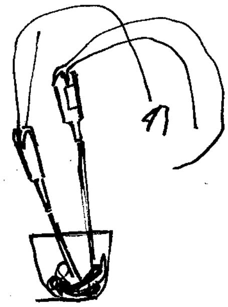
students and bohemians. Everything about Piaf is pungently French, even if (or especially because, depending on your politics) her maternal grandmother, Emma Said ben Mohammed, known as Aïcha, was a Berber from Algeria.

Poised to benefit from the expensive European rollout of Dahan's movie—the French title is "La Môme" ("The Kid"), Leplée's stage name for his scruffy prodigy—were a CD of the soundtrack, a fruity new perfume by Balmain, and the publication or reissue of several biographies and memoirs: "A Life Not Always Pink," by the journalists Philippe Crocq and Jean Mareska; "Piaf, Mon Amie," by Ginou Richer, her dresser and confidante, with a preface by Aznavour; and the feverish "Vivante," an unsourced novella-length reverie with literary pretensions by Isabelle Sobelman, who is Dahan's co-screenwriter. (French resentment of American imperialism, cultural and political, surfaced in both the electoral campaign and the film reviews. *Le Monde* criticized the movie for being the first Hollywood-style bio-pic by a French director about a contemporary French icon, and "Vivante" was promoted—presumably to the same audience of highbrow patriots—as being "like a biography of Edith Piaf, but not in the American style.") There was also a sold-out musical, at the Théâtre Marigny, "Piaf, A Life in Pink and Black," starring Nathalie Lhermitte, who got the audience up and singing; "Moi pour Toi," an edition of Piaf's correspondence with the middleweight world boxing champion Marcel Cerdan, her true love; a comic book illustrating her lyrics; and a special Piaf photo supplement to *Paris Match.*



Legend has it that Edith Giovanna Gassion was born on the pavement, although her birth certificate locates the event in a hospital near her mother's apartment, on the Rue de Belleville. The neighborhood was then a ramshackle slum in the hilly twentieth arrondissement. When artisans and the working poor were forced out of central Paris, during the Second Empire, many settled in Belleville and its environs. The Paris Commune started there, in March of 1871, and it ended there, that May, with the barricaded citizens mounting the last, most ferocious pocket of resistance to imperial force.

In Piaf's youth, when she might have crossed paths with Jane Avril and Django Reinhardt, tenements like hers were a haven for political refugees—Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Spaniards—and they later served as a foothold for immigrants from the former French colonies in Africa and Indochina. With its steep landscape, seething street life, and radical cachet, Belleville has figured like a favela in the city's mythology, and it still does. It was recently described in the *Times* as "one of Paris's most shabbily atmospheric corners." It's easy to imagine her, high and wan, in one of the black dresses that seemed to have come from a charity bazaar even when it was signed Dior, arriving late at the clubs with her entourage of minders and enablers, to troll for a new protégé. She came home to be buried—in Père-Lachaise—close to the monuments of the Resistance fighters and deportees who perished in the camps, and to the cemetery wall where the Communard holdouts were shot.

Both of Piaf's parents were buskers with immodest dreams. Her father, Louis Gassion—the contortionist—would look for a level spot near a busy corner and unfurl his mat, cajoling pedestrians to ante up before he entertained them. Much of his meagre earnings went to drink, and when Piaf was rich and famous she paid him an allowance—a cash transaction that took place in a café—and hired a valet, partly to keep him clean and fed but also to restrain him from making a nuisance of himself at her stage doors. In 1914, a month after the First World War began, Louis married Piaf's mother and was sent to the front. He was given a leave to attend Edith's birth, fifteen months later, but was mysteriously AWOL when it occurred. "Maybe he missed the train to Paris," his wife later said bitterly, "but I'll bet he wasn't late for happy hour"—*la buvette*—"at the station bar."

Happy hour, one infers, was any unhappy hour in the Gassion family, on both sides. Piaf's mother, Annetta (or Anita) Maillard, made her living as a street singer. Much of her meagre earnings also went to drink, and once she had recovered from labor she left the newborn with her mother. Aïcha's husband may have owned a circus, perhaps a flea circus (she is described as a "trainer of fleas" by profession, although the expression is ambiguous: it might simply mean a drunk with the D.T.s). Her household, Crocq and Mareska write, was a place where "filth kept company with indigence," and "a slug of plonk was added to the kid's bottle, so she'd fall asleep." When Edith's father paid a visit on his next leave, he decided that a brothel in the countryside might make a more wholesome environment.

Around 1918, Edith, scabby and skeletal, was taken to Normandy, and became the mascot of a house where Louis's mother, depending on the source, was either the owner or the cook. This luxurious idyll of regular meals, baths, and affection was abruptly shattered when, with no warning, the child went blind. A doctor diagnosed infections in both corneas. After a few months of treatment, she recovered her sight. Piaf preferred to believe that the pious whores' fervent prayers to St. Thérèse of Lisieux and a pilgrimage to her shrine effected a miraculous cure. For the rest of her life, she trusted Thérèse to oversee her destiny, though the saint proved to be a capricious patron. The next thunderbolt also fell without warning: Piaf's hapless father came back to reclaim her. Until she was fourteen, when she struck out on her own, and befriended Simone Berteaut, a thirteen-year-old urchin nicknamed Momone, Edith and her father travelled with a provincial circus, and then lived hand to mouth, sleeping in a cheap hotel when they had a good take and on a park bench when they didn't. Her singing of the national anthem, they discovered, earned more applause than his contortions.

By 1935, Piaf and Momone had spent five debauched years bumming around Paris in the company of a thuggish crew. Piaf was performing on the sidewalks and Momone was shilling for her. They told people that they were sisters, and a portion of their earnings went to a pimp. But Piaf never admitted to having prostituted herself, except, perhaps, once: when she needed the money for her daughter's funeral. Marcelle Dupont, who died at two of meningitis, was the fruit of a brief liaison, at seventeen, with a delivery boy of the same age. The baby, pacified with the same formula that Piaf had once imbibed, often slept in the coat closet of a cabaret, while her mother sang for their supper. When Marcelle fell ill, her father took her away.

Leplée chanced by, three months after Marcelle's death, and heard Piaf singing in the Rue Troyon, near the Arc de Triomphe. He invited her to audition for him at Gerny's, then arranged for a well-publicized début before a house full of celebrities, many from the music world. The audience knew the real thing when they heard it, and Maurice Chevalier led the ovation. The Kid was cast as herself in a movie, "La Garçonne," and in 1936 she recorded her first record, "Les Mômes de la Cloche." But then, suddenly, her Papa Leplée was dead—murdered for unknown reasons by an unknown intruder. The crime has never been solved, but suspicion fell on one of Piaf's gangster friends. The press found her guilty by association, even though the police had cleared her, and the animosity of Parisians was so intense—she was hissed off the stage at holes like Au Rat Mort, in Pigalle (the only work she could get)—that she skipped town. She spent about half a year on the road cruising for sailors in ports like Brest or Nice and getting into brawls. What or who brought Piaf to her senses no one knows—perhaps it was St. Thérèse. But she was faithful to only one master: her vocation. With her last few sous, she phoned Leplée's friend Raymond Asso. "Get in a cab," he told her. "I'll pay the fare." She arrived on his doorstep for what proved to be an indefinite stay. "He taught me to become a human being," she said.

Asso reckoned that it took him two years, and Piaf that it took him three, to make her, if not quite a lady, an ex-tramp. He was dealing with a cocky savage who found it natural to receive reporters in a stained bathrobe, or to slug back a full glass of wine in a single gulp. Grooming her manners was a greater challenge, according to Crocq and Maleska, than engaging her mind. Fiction and poetry were part of her reëducation ("I'd always thought of reading as a bourgeois thing," she said), and getting through a Jack London novel was her first achievement. Genius may be innate, but artistry is acquired, and Asso taught Piaf the meaning of rigor. He wrote the earliest of her theme songs, "Mon Légionnaire" (with music by Marguerite Monnot, her longtime collaborator), and choreographed her gestures. They rehearsed until he was satisfied that she knew in her bones what she was singing. If Piaf cheated on Asso the lover, she rewarded Asso the master by becoming a consummate professional—not only as a technician but as a critic who could recognize a great song from the opening bars and help a composer to perfect it. Her own lyrics would be remembered for their dramatic economy even if she hadn't recorded them. By the time Asso was mobilized, in 1939, and went off to war, their affair was over, but Edith Piaf, no longer La Môme, was ready for stardom. A year later, she made her concert début in Occupied Paris, at Salle Pleyel, one of the city's most prestigious halls, accompanied by a full orchestra—the first pop diva to play there. "At first I asked myself what the fuck I was doing in that temple of classicism in my head-housekeeper's dress," she told a radio audience the next morning. "And then, since people seemed happy to hear me, I was happy, too, and I forgot where I came from."

Piaf, of course, never really could forget where she came from, and in Marcel Cerdan, "the Moroccan bomber," she found a soul mate. He was a handsome pig farmer who was emblematic to the French in the way Piaf was, as a working-class hero. They were mutually dazzled by their prowess in different arenas. Here was a man whom she couldn't dominate, and who wasn't daunted by her hunger or success, because ferocity only excites a champion. It was as archetypes that they fell in love (he heard her sing, she watched him fight, both from a front row), and the public fell in love with them as a couple—republican royalty. But Cerdan had a wife and children in Casablanca, and his paternal loyalty moved Piaf to renounce any hope of becoming the second Mme. Cerdan. When their schedules kept them apart, as they mostly did, they exchanged rapturously incautious letters. In time, perhaps, his

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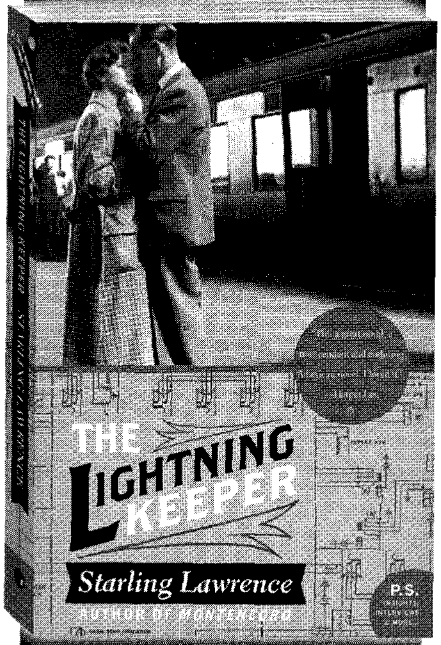

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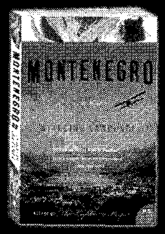

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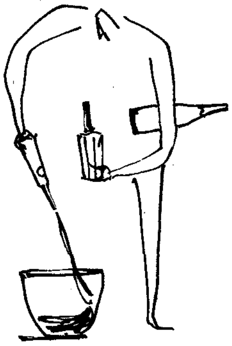
example of self-discipline might have helped her to stop brutalizing herself. But almost two years into their affair—on the night of October 27, 1949—Cerdan was killed in a plane crash over the Azores, on his way to visit Piaf in New York. He had planned to travel by sea, but changed his mind in response to her phone call begging him to fly.



Piaf’s story loses its momentum from this point on. Dahan tries to grapple with its inherent tedium by fragmenting the narrative into flashbacks, but he doesn’t grapple with the problem of a life that ceases to evolve. In 1952, Piaf married Jacques Pills, a singer now forgotten. (Marlene Dietrich, one of the rare women whom Piaf considered a close friend, was her witness. There is a photograph of them before the ceremony, the frizzy-haired bride looking bloated in a pleated dress, and Dietrich, sublimely elegant, kneeling at Piaf’s feet to fix a shoe.) Pills was a decent man and a good drinking companion, but when he discovered Piaf shooting morphine he was in over his head. She never gave up trying to contact Cerdan through the spirit world. Frauds, crackpots, thieves, and parasites—“grotesque puppets,” as Asso put it—feasted on her fortune. Each of her paramours received the regulation starter kit of a gold watch, cufflinks, and a lighter, and was subjected to a regimen of sleepless nights, jealous scenes, career coaching, and betrayal. Money was abstract to her, and she spent it and her health with the same abandon, and the same results—a chronic state of near-bankruptcy. So she had to keep working, and, in addition to her unending tours and recording sessions, she made nine films, including, in 1954, Jean Renoir’s “French Cancan” and Sacha Guitry’s “Si Versailles M’Était Conté,” starring Orson Welles, Gérard Philipe, Brigitte Bardot, and a whole firmament. (Directors cast her to sing; only Cocteau seems to have discerned her talents as a comedian.) She survived a staggering number of automobile accidents, but her sense of futility was probably more lethal than her cars. “For eight days, every evening, two thousand people are the enthusiastic bystanders to a suicide attempt,” a journalist for *Libération* wrote of a concert series in the late fifties.

Last April, I made an appointment to visit the Musée Edith Piaf, a private shrine on the Rue Crespin-du-Gast, not far from Père-Lachaise. It was created in 1977 by Bernard Marchois, the founder of Piaf’s fan club and the editor of “Opinions Publiques,” an anthology of reminiscences with some of the people who knew her best, including Asso and Marguerite Monnot. Marchois was sixteen when he was introduced to Piaf, in 1958, and she was forty-three. She had collapsed earlier that year on the stage of the Olympia, and her condition was alarming. Louis Barrier, her long-suffering manager, cancelled or postponed her engagements and persuaded her to buy a country villa in the Seine-et-Oise. But without her crew, and, as Crocq and Maleska note, twelve miles from the nearest bar, which closed at eight, she couldn’t take the peace and quiet. Neither Barrier nor her doctors could prevent her from embarking on another road trip. She was practically a corpse when it ended, but in 1961 she met a shy twenty-six-year-old Greek hairdresser from the outskirts of Paris, Théophanis Lamboukas. He was twice her height and as handsome as a god. They married in an Orthodox ceremony, and she willed him to become a singer—Théo Sarapo. Many of her fans and friends considered him a gold digger, but he doted on her, tenderly styling what was left of her hair. Together they performed Michel Emer’s duet, which is Piaf’s credo, “À Quoi Ça Sert l’Amour?” Despite her premature decrepitude—she looked like an old mother defending her devout faith in love to a doubting son—it was her last moment of incandescence.

The museum is a tiny apartment owned by the Piaf fan club. One of its two rooms is painted red, the other yellow. The furnishings came from the grand Haussmannian apartment on the Boulevard Lannes that she bought with Pills. They include a teal-blue horsehair sofa with fur pillows, a collection of imitation Renaissance pottery, and a mantel clock with a figure of the Marquise de Sévigné, pen in hand. Framed on the walls are a variety of posters and portraits, and several letters. In one, written on her twenty-sixth birthday, Piaf complains of getting old. A black dress with a sweetheart neckline, by the couturier Jacques Heim, is displayed on a mannequin. She wore it onstage with a showy Rosicrucian cross that Dietrich gave her as a wedding present. “I started collecting things while Piaf was alive,” Marchois said, “and later the family and artist friends made donations.” They include her Victrola; some of her custom-made T-straps, in size 4; and a velvet dressing gown that she bought for Georges Moustaki, who wrote “Milord.” An enormous stuffed bear occupies a chair in the corner. “It’s exactly Edith’s height,” Marchois explained. “She loved stuffed animals, and was buried with a rabbit.” Perhaps the most poignant item in this claustrophobic reliquary is a pair of Cerdan’s sparring gloves. “My God, how much I love you,” she wrote to him on May 27, 1949, three weeks before he lost his title match to Jake LaMotta, in Detroit. “I would like to put myself at your knees and spend my time admiring you, serving you, loving you, being nothing but yours and having nothing but you before my eyes.” “What a lucky man I am,” Cerdan told Piaf humbly. “Me, just a brute of a boxer.”

Marchois kept looking at his watch—he had a doctor’s appointment—so he turned off the Piaf CD he was playing, and we said goodbye on the sidewalk. Needing some fresh air, I walked to Père-Lachaise and found the tomb that Piaf shares with her father, her daughter, and Sarapo, who died in a car crash in 1970. The shiny slab of black marble is engraved with the motto “*Dieu réunit ceux qui s’aiment,*” and it was smothered with fresh roses. A small crowd of twenty or so fans and tourists had gathered. Two of them were a mother and daughter who had seen Dahan’s film and were taking pictures with a cell phone. One was a Swiss teen-ager with a pierced lip. “I’m here because my mother was a Parisienne,” she said, “and she always loved Piaf.” When the others had left, an elderly couple introduced themselves. They told me that they come often, and that “even in the rain there are people here. It has nothing to do with this new film, there was an old one that was better. Most of them are like us. They saw her sing and they just can’t forget her.” ◆

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE GENERAL'S REPORT

How Antonio Taguba, who investigated the Abu Ghraib scandal, became one of its casualties.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

On the afternoon of May 6, 2004, Army Major General Antonio M. Taguba was summoned to meet, for the first time, with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in his Pentagon conference room. Rumsfeld and his senior staff were to testify the next day, in televised hearings before the Senate and the House Armed Services Committees, about abuses at Abu Ghraib prison, in Iraq. The previous week, revelations about Abu Ghraib, including photographs showing prisoners stripped, abused, and sexually humiliated, had appeared on CBS and in *The New Yorker*. In response, Administration officials had insisted that only a few low-ranking soldiers were involved and that America did not torture prisoners. They emphasized that the Army itself had uncovered the scandal.

If there was a redeeming aspect to the affair, it was in the thoroughness and the passion of the Army's initial investigation. The inquiry had begun in January, and was led by General Taguba, who was stationed in Kuwait at the time. Taguba filed his report in March. In it he found:

> Numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees . . . systemic and illegal abuse.

Taguba was met at the door of the conference room by an old friend, Lieutenant General Bantz J. Craddock, who was Rumsfeld's senior military assistant. Craddock's daughter had been a babysitter for Taguba's two children when the officers served together years earlier at Fort Stewart, Georgia. But that afternoon, Taguba recalled, "Craddock just said, very coldly, 'Wait here.'" In a series of interviews early this year, the first he has given, Taguba told me that he understood when he began the inquiry that it could damage his career; early on, a senior general in Iraq had pointed out to him that the abused detainees were "only Iraqis." Even so, he was not prepared for the greeting he received when he was finally ushered in.

"Here . . . comes . . . that *famous* General Taguba—of the Taguba report!" Rumsfeld declared, in a mocking voice. The meeting was attended by Paul Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld's deputy; Stephen Cambone, the Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (J.C.S.); and General Peter Schoomaker, the Army chief of staff, along with Craddock and other officials. Taguba, describing the moment nearly three years later, said, sadly, "I thought they wanted to know. I assumed they wanted to know. I was ignorant of the setting."

In the meeting, the officials professed ignorance about Abu Ghraib. "Could you tell us what happened?" Wolfowitz asked. Someone else asked, "Is it abuse or torture?" At that point, Taguba recalled, "I described a naked detainee lying on the wet floor, handcuffed, with an interrogator shoving things up his rectum, and said, 'That's not abuse. That's torture.' There was quiet."

Rumsfeld was particularly concerned about how the classified report had become public. "General," he asked, "who do you think leaked the report?" Taguba responded that perhaps a senior military leader who knew about the investigation had done so. "It was just my speculation," he recalled. "Rumsfeld didn't say anything." (I did not meet Taguba until mid-2006 and obtained his report elsewhere.) Rumsfeld also complained about not being given the information he needed. "Here I am," Taguba recalled Rumsfeld saying, "just a Secretary of Defense, and we have not seen a copy of your report. I have not seen the photographs, and I have to testify to Congress tomorrow and talk about this." As Rumsfeld spoke, Taguba said, "He's looking at me. It was a statement."

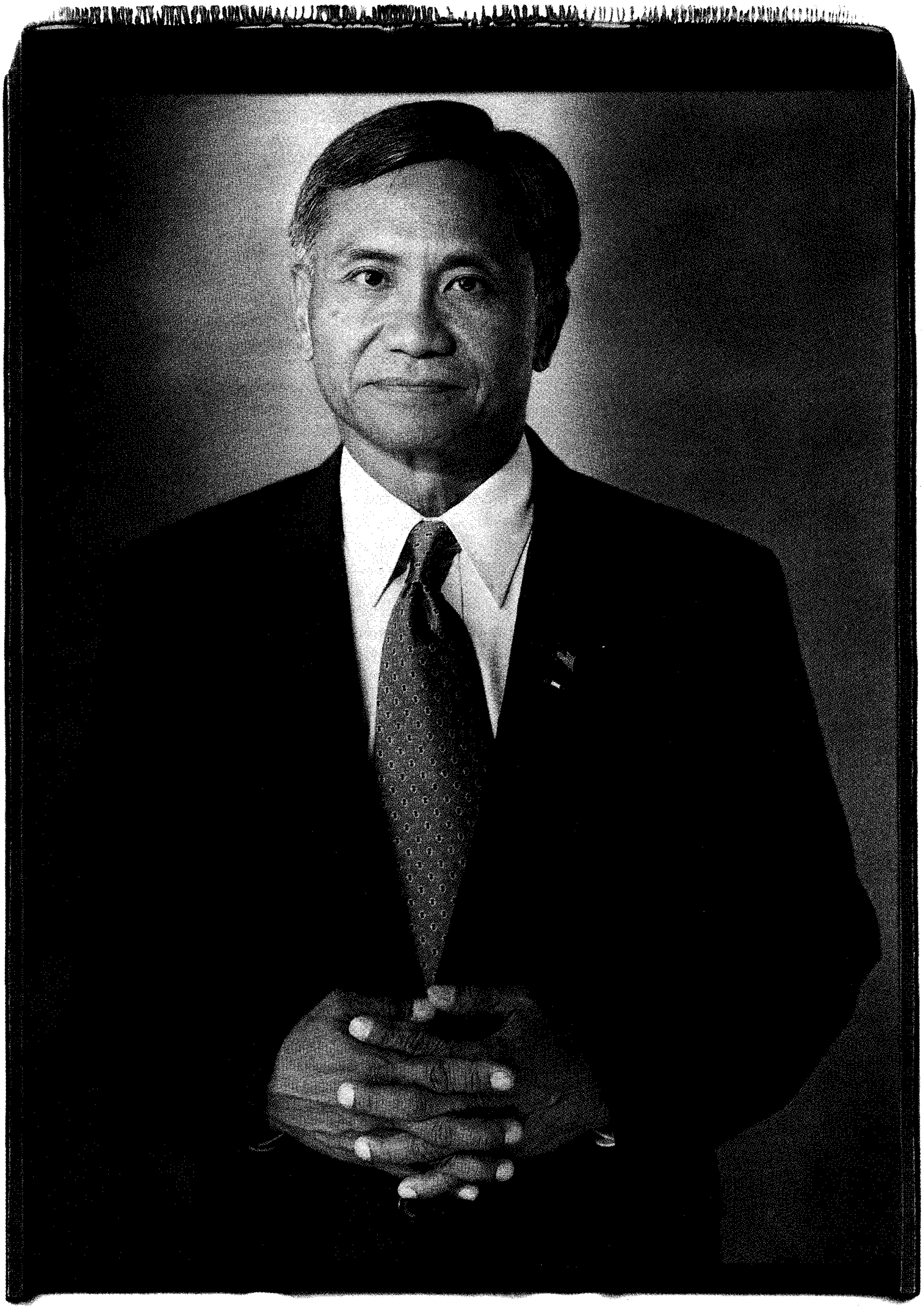
At best, Taguba said, "Rumsfeld was in denial." Taguba had submitted more than a dozen copies of his report through several channels at the Pentagon and to the Central Command headquarters, in Tampa, Florida, which ran the war in Iraq. By the time he walked into Rumsfeld's conference room, he had spent weeks briefing senior military leaders on the report, but he received no indication that any of them, with the exception of General Schoomaker, had actually read it. (Schoomaker later sent Taguba a note praising his honesty and leadership.) When Taguba urged one lieutenant general to look at the photographs, he rebuffed him, saying, "I don't want to get involved by looking, because what do you do with that information, once you know what they show?"

Taguba also knew that senior officials in Rumsfeld's office and elsewhere in the Pentagon had been given a graphic account of the pictures from Abu Ghraib, and told of their potential strategic significance, within days of the first complaint. On January 13, 2004, a military policeman named Joseph Darby gave the Army's Criminal Investigation Division (C.I.D.) a CD full of images of abuse. Two days later, General Craddock and Vice-Admiral Timothy Keating, the director of the Joint Staff of the J.C.S., were e-mailed a summary of the abuses depicted on the CD. It said that approximately ten soldiers were shown, involved in acts that included:

> Having male detainees pose nude while female guards pointed at their genitals; having female detainees exposing themselves to the guards; having detainees perform indecent acts with each other; and guards physically assaulting detainees by beating and dragging them with choker chains.

Taguba said, "You didn't need to 'see'

Taguba knew his report would make him unpopular: "If I lie, I lose. And, if I tell the truth, I lose." Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.



"Today is my birthday, Kaitlin. Have everyone work extra hard."

anything—just take the secure e-mail traffic at face value."

I learned from Taguba that the first wave of materials included descriptions of the sexual humiliation of a father with his son, who were both detainees. Several of these images, including one of an Iraqi woman detainee baring her breasts, have since surfaced; others have not. (Taguba's report noted that photographs and videos were being held by the C.I.D. because of ongoing criminal investigations and their "extremely sensitive nature.") Taguba said that he saw "a video of a male American soldier in uniform sodomizing a female detainee." The video was not made public in any of the subsequent court proceedings, nor has there been any public government mention of it. Such images would have added an even more inflammatory element to the outcry over Abu Ghraib. "It's bad enough that there were photographs of Arab men wearing women's panties," Taguba said.

On January 20th, the chief of staff at Central Command sent another e-mail to Admiral Keating, copied to General Craddock and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the Army commander in Iraq. The chief of staff wrote, "Sir: update on alleged detainee abuse per our discussion. DID IT REALLY HAPPEN? Yes, currently have 4 confessions implicating perhaps 10 soldiers. DO PHOTOS EXIST? Yes. A CD with approx 100 photos and a video—CID has these in their possession."

In subsequent testimony, General Myers, the J.C.S. chairman, acknowledged, without mentioning the e-mails, that in January information about the photographs had been given "to me and the Secretary up through the chain of command. . . . And the general nature of the photos, about nudity, some mock sexual acts and other abuse, was described."

Nevertheless, Rumsfeld, in his appearances before the Senate and the House Armed Services Committees on May 7th, claimed to have had no idea of the extensive abuse. "It breaks our hearts that in fact someone didn't say, 'Wait, look, this is terrible. We need to do something,'" Rumsfeld told the congressmen. "I wish we had known more, sooner, and been able to tell you more sooner, but we didn't."

Rumsfeld told the legislators that, when stories about the Taguba report appeared, "it was not yet in the Pentagon, to my knowledge." As for the photographs, Rumsfeld told the senators, "I say no one in the Pentagon had seen them"; at the House hearing, he said, "I didn't see them until last night at 7:30." Asked specifically when he had been made aware of the photographs, Rumsfeld said:

> There were rumors of photographs in a criminal prosecution chain back sometime after January 13th . . . I don't remember precisely when, but sometime in that period of January, February, March. . . . The legal part of it was proceeding along fine. What wasn't proceeding along fine is the fact that the President didn't know, and you didn't know, and I didn't know.

"And, as a result, somebody just sent a secret report to the press, and there they are," Rumsfeld said.

Taguba, watching the hearings, was appalled. He believed that Rumsfeld's testimony was simply not true. "The photographs were available to him—if he wanted to see them," Taguba said. Rumsfeld's lack of knowledge was hard to credit. Taguba later wondered if perhaps Cambone had the photographs and kept them from Rumsfeld because he was reluctant to give his notoriously difficult boss bad news. But Taguba also recalled thinking, "Rumsfeld is very perceptive and has a mind like a steel trap. There's no way he's suffering from C.R.S.—Can't Remember Shit. He's trying to acquit himself, and a lot of people are lying to protect themselves." It distressed Taguba that Rumsfeld was accompanied in his Senate and House appearances by senior military officers who concurred with his denials.

"The whole idea that Rumsfeld projects—'We're here to protect the nation from terrorism'—is an oxymoron," Taguba said. "He and his aides have abused their offices and have no idea of the values and high standards that are expected of them. And they've dragged a lot of officers with them."

In response to detailed queries about this article, Colonel Gary Keck, a Pentagon spokesman, said in an e-mail, "The department did not promulgate interrogation policies or guidelines that directed, sanctioned, or encouraged abuse." He added, "When there have been abuses, those violations are taken seriously, acted upon promptly, investigated thoroughly, and the wrongdoers are held accountable." Regarding early warnings about Abu Ghraib, Colonel Keck said, "Former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has stated publicly under oath that he and other senior leaders were not provided pictures from Abu Ghraib until shortly before their release." (Rumsfeld, through an aide, declined to answer questions, as did General Craddock. Other senior commanders did not respond to requests for comment.)

During the next two years, Taguba assiduously avoided the press, telling his relatives not to talk about his work. Friends and family had been inundated with telephone calls and visitors, and, Taguba said, "I didn't want them to be involved." Taguba retired in January, 2007, after thirty-four years of active service, and finally agreed to talk to me about his investigation of Abu Ghraib and what he believed were the serious misrepresentations by officials that followed. "From what I knew, troops just don't take it upon themselves to initiate what they did without any form of knowledge of the higher-ups," Taguba told me. His orders were clear, however: he was to investigate only the military police at Abu Ghraib, and not those above them in the chain of command. "These M.P. troops were not that creative," he said. "Somebody was giving them guidance, but I was legally prevented from further investigation into higher authority. I was limited to a box."

General Taguba is a slight man with a friendly demeanor and an unfailingly polite correctness. "I came from a poor family and had to work hard," he said. "It was always shine the shoes on Saturday morning for church, and wash the car on Saturday for church. And Saturday also for mowing the lawn and doing yard jobs for church."

His father, Tomas, was born in the Philippines and was drafted into the Philippine Scouts in early 1942, at the height of the Japanese attack on the joint American-Filipino force led by General Douglas MacArthur. Tomas was captured by the Japanese on the Bataan peninsula in April, 1942, and endured the Bataan Death March, which took thousands of American and Filipino lives. Tomas escaped and joined the underground resistance to the Japanese before returning to the American Army, in July, 1945.

Taguba's mother, Maria, spent much of the Second World War living across the street from a Japanese-run prisoner-of-war camp in Manila. Taguba remembers her vivid accounts of prisoners who were bayonetted arbitrarily or whose fingernails were pulled out. Antonio, the eldest son (he has six siblings), was born in Manila in 1950. Maria and Tomas were devout Catholics, and their children were taught respect and, Taguba recalls, "above all, integrity in how you lived your life and practiced your religion."

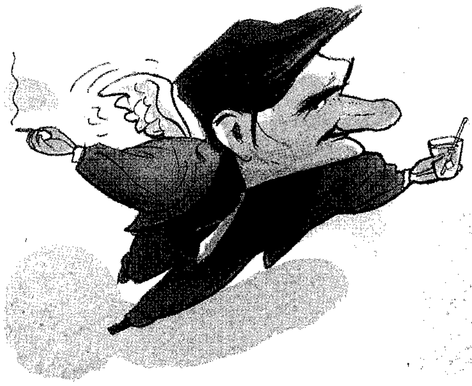
In 1961, the family moved to Hawaii, where Tomas retired from the military and took a civilian job in logistics, preparing units for deployment to Vietnam. A year after they arrived, Antonio became a U.S. citizen. By then, as a sixth grader, he was delivering newspapers, serving as an altar boy, and doing well in school. He went to Idaho State University, in Pocatello, with help from the Army R.O.T.C., and graduated in 1972. As a newly commissioned second lieutenant, he was five feet six inches tall and weighed a hundred and twenty pounds. His Army service began immediately: he led troops at the platoon, company, battalion, and brigade levels at bases in South Korea, Germany, and across America. (He married in 1981, and has two grown children.) In 1986, Taguba, then a major, was selected to attend the College of Naval Command and Staff at the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island. While there, he wrote an analysis of Soviet ground-attack planning that became required reading at the school. He was promoted, ahead of his peers, to become a colonel and then a general. On the way, Taguba earned three master's degrees—in public administration, international relations, and national-security studies.

"I'll talk to you about discrimination," he said one morning, while discussing, without bitterness, his early years as an Army officer. "Let's talk about being refused to be served at a restaurant in public. Let's talk about having to do things two times, and being accused of not speaking English well, and having to pay myself for my three master's degrees because the Army didn't think I was smart enough. So what? Just work your ass off. So what? The hard work paid off."

Taguba had joined the Army knowing little about his father's military experience. "He saw the ravages and brutality of war, but he wasn't about to brag about his exploits," Taguba said. "He didn't say anything until 1997, and it took me two years to rebuild his records and show that he was authorized for an

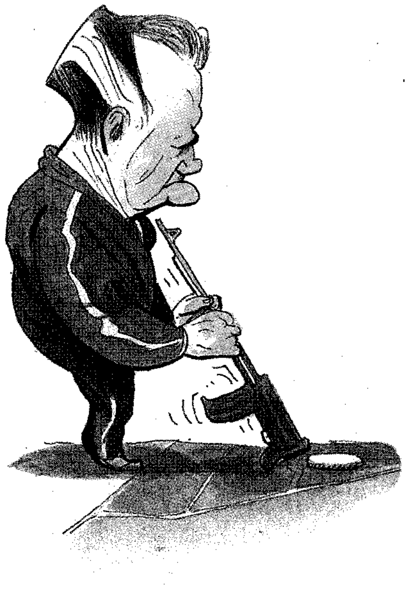
"I really shouldn't have any dessert. My trainer told me never to eat out of boredom."

“SOPRANOS” SPINOFFS BY BEN GREENMAN AND STEVE BRODNER



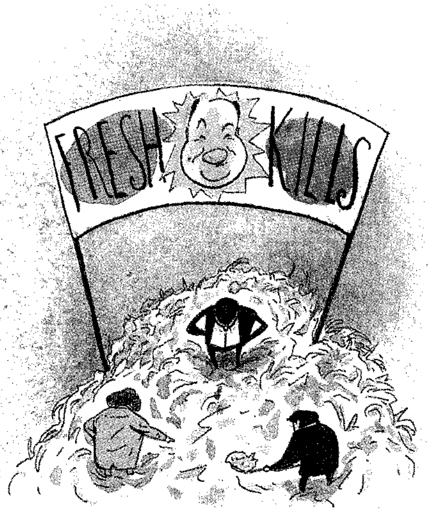
“Made . . . in Heaven”

Christopher Moltisanti (Michael Imperioli) wakes up in his S.U.V. Outside, the highway median is covered with brilliant blossoms. He’s in an afterlife where the dead live once more. He moves to the suburbs, where he is reunited with Adriana (Drea de Matteo) and even Cosette (the dog he killed when he was high and sat on it). But all is not well in paradise. There’s talk of someone new moving to the neighborhood. Who will it be?



“It’s Paulie!”

Paulie Walnuts (Tony Sirico) retires to Florida, where he falls in with Jack (Bob Newhart), Ollie (Don Rickles), and Milt (Hal Linden). At first, Paulie thinks he’s the joker in the deck, but he comes to see that his new friends are just as crotchety and spirited as he is. “We’re like the Odd Couple, if there were four of them and no Felix,” he likes to say.

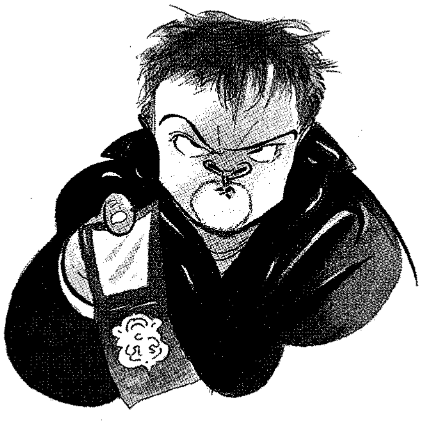


“CSI: Tony”

A team of brilliant forensic scientists in New Jersey—Alex (Alyssa Milano), Mason (James Van Der Beek), Jamie (Elisha Cuthbert), and their leader, Max (Don Johnson)—use the newest and most expensive technology to solve crimes committed by Tony Soprano.

“A.J., P.I.”

Anthony, Jr. (Robert Iler), has spent a few semesters at college, alternately hanging with junior goons and satisfying his intellectual curiosity. One day, as he is reading “Fantômas,” he decides that he will become a private investigator. He hires a sexy sidekick (Brittany Murphy), whose father (Burt Reynolds) happens to be a tough ex-detective. For A.J.’s first case, a mysterious widow hires him to find her husband, who she believes is still alive.



award.” On Tomas’s eightieth birthday, he was awarded the Bronze Star and a prisoner-of-war medal in a ceremony at Schofield Barracks, in Hawaii. “My father never laughed,” Taguba said. But the day he got his medal “he smiled—he had a big-ass smile on his face. I’d never seen him look so proud. He was a bent man with carpal-tunnel syndrome, but at the end of the medal ceremony he stood himself up and saluted. I cried, and everyone in my family burst into tears.”

Richard Armitage, a former Navy counter-insurgency officer who served as Deputy Secretary of State in the first Bush term, recalled meeting Taguba, then a lieutenant colonel, in South Korea in the early nineteen-nineties. “I was told to keep an eye on this young guy—‘He’s going to be a general,’ ” Armitage said. “Taguba was discreet and low key—not a sprinter but a marathoner.”

At the time, Taguba was working for Major General Mike Myatt, a marine who was the officer in charge of strategic talks with the South Koreans, on behalf of the American military. “I needed an executive assistant with brains and integrity,” Myatt, who is now retired and living in San Francisco, told me. After interviewing a number of young officers, he chose Taguba. “He was ethical and he knew his stuff,” Myatt said. “We really became close, and I’d trust him with my life. We talked about military strategy and policy, and the moral aspect of war—the importance of not losing the moral high ground.” Myatt followed Taguba’s involvement in the Abu Ghraib inquiry, and said, “I was so proud of him. I told him, ‘Tony, you’ve maintained yourself, and your integrity.’ ”

Taguba got a different message, however, from other officers, among them General John Abizaid, then the head of Central Command. A few weeks after his report became public, Taguba, who was still in Kuwait, was in the back seat of a Mercedes sedan with Abizaid. Abizaid’s driver and his interpreter, who also served as a bodyguard, were in front. Abizaid turned to Taguba and issued a quiet warning: “You and your report will be investigated.”

“I wasn’t angry about what he said but disappointed that he would say that to me,” Taguba said. “I’d been in the

Army thirty-two years by then, and it was the first time that I thought I was in the Mafia."

THE INVESTIGATION

Taguba was given the job of investigating Abu Ghraib because of circumstance: the senior officer of the 800th Military Police Brigade, to which the soldiers in the photographs belonged, was a one-star general; Army regulations required that the head of the inquiry be senior to the commander of the unit being investigated, and Taguba, a two-star general, was available. "It was as simple as that," he said. He vividly remembers his first thought upon seeing the photographs in late January of 2004: "Unbelievable! What were these people doing?" There was an immediate second thought: "This is big."

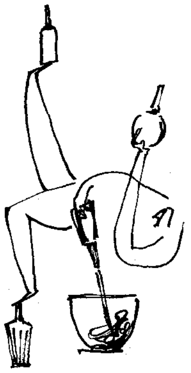
Taguba decided to keep the photographs from most of the interrogators and researchers on his staff of twenty-three officers. "I didn't want them to prejudge the soldiers they were investigating, so I put the photos in a safe," he told me. "Anyone who wanted to see them had to have a need-to-know and go through me." His decision to keep the staff in the background was also intended to insure that none of them suffered damage to his or her career because of involvement in the inquiry. "I knew it was going to be very sensitive because of the gravity of what was in front of us," he said.

The team spent much of February, 2004, in Iraq. Taguba was overwhelmed by the scale of the wrongdoing. "These were people who were taken off the streets and put in jail—teen-agers and old men and women," he said. "I kept on asking these questions of the officers I interviewed: 'You knew what was going on. Why didn't you do something to stop it?' "

Taguba's assignment was limited to investigating the 800th M.P.s, but he quickly found signs of the involvement of military intelligence—both the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade, commanded by Colonel Thomas Pappas, which worked closely with the M.P.s, and what were called "other government agencies," or O.G.A.s, a euphemism for the C.I.A. and special-operations units operating undercover in Iraq. Some of the earliest evidence involved Lieutenant Colonel Steven L. Jordan, whose name was mentioned in interviews with several M.P.s. For the first three weeks of the investigation, Jordan was nowhere to be found, despite repeated requests. When the investigators finally located him, he asked whether he needed to shave his beard before being interviewed—Taguba suspected that he had been dressing as a civilian. "When I asked him about his assignment, he says, 'I'm a liaison officer for intelligence from Army headquarters in Iraq.' " But in the course of three or four interviews with Jordan, Taguba said, he began to suspect that the lieutenant colonel had been more intimately involved in the interrogation process—some of it brutal—for "high value" detainees.

"Jordan denied everything, and yet he had the authority to enter the prison's 'hard site' "—where the most important detainees were held—"carrying a carbine and an M9 pistol, which is against regulations," Taguba said. Jordan had also led a squad of military policemen in a shoot-out inside the hard site with a detainee from Syria who had managed to obtain a gun. (A lawyer for Jordan disputed these allegations; in the shoot-out, he said, Jordan was "just another gun on the extraction team" and not the leader. He noted that Jordan was not a trained interrogator.)

Taguba said that Jordan's "record reflected an extensive intelligence background." He also had reason to believe that Jordan was not reporting through the chain of command. But Taguba's narrowly focussed mission constrained the questions he could ask. "I suspected that somebody was giving them guidance, but I could not print that," Taguba said.



"After all Jordan's evasiveness and misleading responses, his rights were read to him," Taguba went on. Jordan subsequently became the only officer facing trial on criminal charges in connection with Abu Ghraib and is scheduled to be court-martialled in late August. (Seven M.P.s were convicted of charges that included dereliction of duty, maltreatment, and assault; one defendant, Specialist Charles Graner, was sentenced to ten years in prison.) Last month, a military judge ruled that Jordan, who is still assigned to the Army's Intelligence and Security Command, had not been appropriately advised of his rights during his interviews with Taguba, undermining the Army's allegation that he lied during the Taguba inquiry. Six other charges remain, including failure to obey an order or regulation; cruelty and maltreatment; and false swearing and obstruction of justice. (His lawyer said, "The evidence clearly shows that he is innocent.")

Taguba came to believe that Lieutenant General Sanchez, the Army commander in Iraq, and some of the generals assigned to the military headquarters in Baghdad had extensive knowledge of the abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib even before Joseph Darby came forward with the CD. Taguba was aware that in the fall of 2003—when much of the abuse took place—Sanchez routinely visited the prison, and witnessed at least one interrogation. According to Taguba, "Sanchez knew exactly what was going on."

Taguba learned that in August, 2003, as the Sunni insurgency in Iraq was gaining force, the Pentagon had ordered Major General Geoffrey Miller, the commander at Guantánamo, to Iraq. His mission was to survey the prison system there and to find ways to improve the flow of intelligence. The core of Miller's recommendations, as summarized in the Taguba report, was that the military police at Abu Ghraib should become part of the interrogation process: they should work closely with interrogators and intelligence officers in "setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the internees."

Taguba concluded that Miller's approach was not consistent with Army doctrine, which gave military police the overriding mission of making sure that the prisons were secure and orderly. His report cited testimony that interrogators and other intelligence personnel were encouraging the abuse of detainees. "Loosen this guy up for us," one M.P. said he was told by a member of military intelligence. "Make sure he has a bad night."

The M.P.s, Taguba said, "were being literally exploited by the military interrogators. My view is that those kids"—even the soldiers in the photographs—"were poorly led, not trained, and had not been given any standard operating procedures on how they should guard the detainees."

Surprisingly, given Taguba's findings, Miller was the officer chosen to restore order at Abu Ghraib. In April, 2004, a month after the report was filed, he was reassigned there as the deputy commander for detainee operations. "Miller called in the spring and asked to meet with me to discuss Abu Ghraib, but I waited for him and we never did meet," Taguba recounted. Miller later told Taguba that he'd been ordered to Washington to meet with Rumsfeld before travelling to Iraq, but he never attempted to reschedule the meeting.

If they had spoken, Taguba said, he would have reminded Miller that at Abu Ghraib, unlike at Guantánamo, very few prisoners were affiliated with any terrorist group. Taguba had seen classified documents revealing that there were only "one or two" suspected Al Qaeda prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Most of the detainees had nothing to do with the insurgency. A few of them were common criminals.

Taguba had known Miller for years. "We served together in Korea and in the Pentagon, and his wife and mine used to go shopping together," Taguba said. But, after his report became public, "Miller didn't talk to me. He didn't say a word when I passed him in the hallway."

TRIBUTARIES

All the roads in the village unite at the fountain.
Avenue of Liberty, Avenue of the Acacia Trees—
The fountain rises at the center of the plaza;
on sunny days, rainbows in the piss of the cherub.

In summer, couples sit at the pool's edge.
There's room in the pool for many reflections;
the plaza's nearly empty, the acacia trees don't get this far.
And the Avenue of Liberty is barren and austere; its image
doesn't crowd the water.

Interspersed with the couples, mothers with their younger children.
Here's where they come to talk to one another, maybe
meet a young man, see if there's anything left of their beauty.
When they look down, it's a sad moment: the water isn't encouraging.

The husbands are off working, but by some miracle
all the amorous young men are always free;
they sit at the edge of the fountain, splashing their sweethearts
with fountain water.

Around the fountain, there are clusters of metal tables.
This is where you sit when you're old,
beyond the intensities of the fountain.
The fountain is for the young, who still want to look at themselves.
Or for the mothers, who need to keep their children diverted.

A few old people linger at the tables.
Life is simple now: one day cognac, one day coffee and a cigarette.
To the couples, it's clear who's on the outskirts of life, who's at the center.

Despite the subsequent public furor over Abu Ghraib, neither the House nor the Senate Armed Services Committee hearings led to a serious effort to determine whether the scandal was a result of a high-level interrogation policy that encouraged abuse. At the House Committee hearing on May 7, 2004, a freshman Democratic congressman, Kendrick Meek, of Florida, asked Rumsfeld if it was time for him to resign. Rumsfeld replied, "I would resign in a minute if I thought that I couldn't be effective. . . . I have to wrestle with that." But, he added, "I'm certainly not going to resign because some people are trying to make a political issue out of it." (Rumsfeld stayed in office for the next two and a half years, until the day after the 2006 congressional elections.) When I spoke to Meek recently, he said, "There was no way Rumsfeld didn't know what was going on. He's a guy who wants to know everything, and what he was giving us was hard to believe."

Later that month, Rumsfeld appeared before a closed hearing of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, which votes on the funds for all secret operations in the military. Representative David Obey, of Wisconsin, the senior Democrat at the hearing, told me that he had been angry when a fellow subcommittee member "made the comment that 'Abu Ghraib was the price of defending democracy.' I said that wasn't the way I saw it, and that I didn't want to see some corporal made into a scapegoat. This could not have happened without people in the upper echelon of the Administration giving signals. I just didn't see how this was not systemic."

Obey asked Rumsfeld a series of pointed questions. Taguba attended the closed hearing with Rumsfeld and recalled him bristling at Obey's inquiries. "I don't know what happened!" Rumsfeld told Obey. "Maybe you want to ask General Taguba."

Taguba got a chance to answer questions on May 11th, when he was summoned to appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Under-Secretary Stephen Cambone sat beside him. (Cambone was Rumsfeld's point man on interrogation policy.) Cambone, too, told the committee that he hadn't known about the specific abuses at Abu Ghraib until he saw Taguba's report, "when I was exposed to some of those photographs."

Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan, tried to focus on whether Abu Ghraib was the consequence of a larger detainee policy. "These acts of abuse were not the spontaneous actions of lower-ranking enlisted personnel," Levin said. "These attempts to extract information from prisoners by abusive and degrading methods were clearly planned and suggested by

The children cry, they sometimes fight over toys.
But the water's there, to remind the mothers that they love these children,
that for them to drown would be terrible.

The mothers are tired constantly, the children are always fighting,
the husbands at work or angry. No young man comes.
The couples are like an image from some faraway time, an echo coming
very faint from the mountains.

They're alone at the fountain, in a dark well.
They've been exiled by the world of hope,
which is the world of action,
but the world of thought hasn't as yet opened to them.
When it does, everything will change.

Darkness is falling, the plaza empties.
The first leaves of autumn litter the fountain.
The roads don't gather here anymore;
the fountain sends them away, back into the hills they came from.

Avenue of Broken Faith, Avenue of Disappointment,
Avenue of the Acacia Trees, of Olive Trees,
the wind filling with silver leaves,

Avenue of Lost Time, Avenue of Liberty that ends in stone,
not at the field's edge but at the foot of the mountain.

—*Louise Glück*

others." The senators repeatedly asked about General Miller's trip to Iraq in 2003. Did the "Gitmo-izing" of Abu Ghraib—especially the model of using the M.P.s in "setting the conditions" for interrogations—lead to the abuses?

Cambone confirmed that Miller had been sent to Iraq with his approval, but insisted that the senators were "misreading General Miller's intent." Questioned on that point by Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island, Cambone said, "I don't know that I was being told, and I don't know that General Miller said that there should be that kind of activity that you are ascribing to his recommendation."

Reed then asked Taguba, "Was it clear from your reading of the [Miller] report that one of the major recommendations was to use guards to condition these prisoners?" Taguba replied, "Yes, sir. That was recommended on the report."

At another point, after Taguba confirmed that military intelligence had taken control of the M.P.s following Miller's visit, Levin questioned Cambone:

LEVIN: Do you disagree with what the general just said?
CAMBONE: Yes, sir.
LEVIN: Pardon?
CAMBONE: I do.

Taguba, looking back on his testimony, said, "That's the reason I wasn't in their camp—because I kept on contradicting them. I wasn't about to lie to the committee. I knew I was already in a losing proposition. If I lie, I lose. And, if I tell the truth, I lose."

Taguba had been scheduled to rotate to the Third Army's headquarters, at Fort McPherson, Georgia, in June of 2004. He was instead ordered back to the Pentagon, to work in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. "It was a lateral assignment," Taguba said, with a smile and a shrug. "I didn't quibble. If you're going to do that to me, well, O.K. We all serve at the pleasure of the President." A retired four-star Army general later told Taguba that he had been sent to the job in the Pentagon so that he could "be watched." Taguba realized that his career was at a dead end.

Later in 2004, Taguba encountered Rumsfeld and one of his senior press aides, Lawrence Di Rita, in the Pentagon Athletic Center. Taguba was getting dressed after a workout. "I was tying my shoes," Taguba recalled. "I looked up, and there they were." Rumsfeld, who was putting his clothes into a locker, recognized Taguba and said, "Hello, General." Di Rita, who was standing beside Rumsfeld, said sarcastically, "See what you started, General? See what you started?"

Di Rita, who is now an official with Bank of America, recalled running into Taguba in the locker room but not his words. "Sounds like my brand of humor," he said, in an e-mail. "A comment like that would have been in an attempt to lighten the mood for General Taguba." (Di Rita added that Taguba had "my personal respect and admiration" and that of Rumsfeld. "He did a terrific job under difficult circumstances.") However, Taguba was troubled by the encounter, and later told a colleague, "*I'm* now the problem."

DENIABILITY

A dozen government investigations have been conducted into Abu Ghraib and detainee abuse. A few of them picked up on matters raised by Taguba's report, but none followed through on the question of ultimate responsibility. Military investigators were precluded from looking into the role of Rumsfeld and other civilian leaders in the Pentagon; the result was that none found any high-level intelligence involvement in the abuse.

An independent panel headed by James R. Schlesinger, a former Secretary of Defense, did conclude that there was "institutional and personal responsibility at higher levels" for Abu Ghraib, but cleared Rumsfeld of any direct responsibility. In an August, 2004, report, the Schlesinger panel endorsed Rumsfeld's complaints, citing "the reluctance to move bad news up the chain of command" as the most important factor in Washington's failure to understand the significance of Abu Ghraib. "Given the magnitude of this problem, the Secretary of Defense and other senior DoD officials need a more effective information pipeline to inform them of high-profile incidents," the report said. Schlesinger and his colleagues apparently were unaware of the early e-mail messages that had informed the Pentagon of Abu Ghraib.

The official inquiries consistently provided the public with less information about abuses than outside studies conducted by human-rights groups. In one case, in November, 2004, an Army investigation, by Brigadier General Richard Formica, into the treatment of detainees at Camp Nama, a Special Forces detention center at Baghdad International Airport, concluded that detainees who reported being sodomized or beaten were seeking sympathy and better treatment, and thus were not credible. For example, Army doctors had initially noted that a complaining detainee's wounds were "consistent with the history [of abuse] he provided. . . . The doctor did find scars on his wrists and noted what he believed to be an anal fissure." Formica had the detainee reëxamined two days later, by another doctor, who found "no fissure, and no scarring. . . . As a result, I did not find medical evidence of the sodomy." In the case of a detainee who died in custody, Formica noted that there had been bruising to the "shoulders, chest, hip, and knees" but added, "It is not unusual for detainees to have minor bruising, cuts and scrapes." In July, 2006, however, Human Rights Watch issued a fifty-three-page report on the "serious mistreatment" of detainees at Camp Nama and two other sites, largely based on witness accounts from Special Forces interrogators and others who served there.

Formica, asked to comment, wrote in an e-mail, "I conducted a thorough investigation . . . and stand by my report." He said that "several issues" he discovered "were corrected." His assignment, Formica noted, was to investigate a unit, and not to conduct "a systematic analysis of Special Operations activities."

The Army also protected General Miller. Since 2002, F.B.I. agents at Guantánamo had been telling their superiors that their military counterparts were abusing detainees. The F.B.I. complaints were ignored until after Abu Ghraib. When an investigation was opened, in December, 2004, General Craddock, Rumsfeld's former military aide, was in charge of the Army's Southern Command, with jurisdiction over Guantánamo—he had been promoted a few months after Taguba's visit to Rumsfeld's office. Craddock appointed Air Force Lieutenant General Randall M. Schmidt, a straight-talking fighter pilot, to investigate the charges, which included alleged abuses during Miller's tenure.

"I'm tired of having to apologize for the condition of the house."

"I followed the bread-crumb trail," Schmidt, who retired last year, told me. "I found some things that didn't seem right. For lack of a camera, you could have seen in Guantánamo what was seen at Abu Ghraib."

Schmidt found that Miller, with the encouragement of Rumsfeld, had focussed great attention on the interrogation of Mohammed al-Qahtani, a Saudi who was believed to be the so-called "twentieth hijacker." Qahtani was interrogated "for twenty hours a day for at least fifty-four days," Schmidt told investigators from the Army Inspector General's office, who were reviewing his findings. "I mean, here's this guy manacled, chained down, dogs brought in, put in his face, told to growl, show teeth, and that kind of stuff. And you can imagine the fear."

At Guantánamo, Schmidt told the investigators, Miller "was responsible for the conduct of interrogations that I found to be abusive and degrading. The intent of those might have been to be abusive and degrading to get the information they needed. . . . Did the means justify the ends? That's fine. . . . He was responsible."

Schmidt formally recommended that Miller be "held accountable" and "admonished." Craddock rejected this recommendation and absolved Miller of any responsibility for the mistreatment of the prisoners. The Inspector General inquiry endorsed Craddock's action. "I was open with them," Schmidt told me, referring to the I.G. investigators. "I told them, 'I'll do anything to help you get the truth.' " But when he read their final report, he said, "I didn't recognize the five hours of interviews with me."

Schmidt learned of Craddock's reversal the day before they were to meet with Rumsfeld, in July, 2005. Rumsfeld was in frequent contact with Miller about the progress of Qahtani's interrogation, and personally approved the most severe interrogation tactics. ("This wasn't just daily business, when the Secretary of Defense is personally involved," Schmidt told the Army investigators.) Nonetheless, Schmidt was impressed by Rumsfeld's demonstrative surprise, dismay, and concern upon being told of the abuse. "He was going, 'My God! Did I *authorize* putting a bra and underwear on this guy's head and telling him all his buddies knew he was a homosexual?' "

Schmidt was convinced. "I got to tell you that I never got the feeling that Secretary Rumsfeld was trying to hide anything," he told me. "He got very frustrated. He's a control guy, and this had gotten out of control. He got pissed."

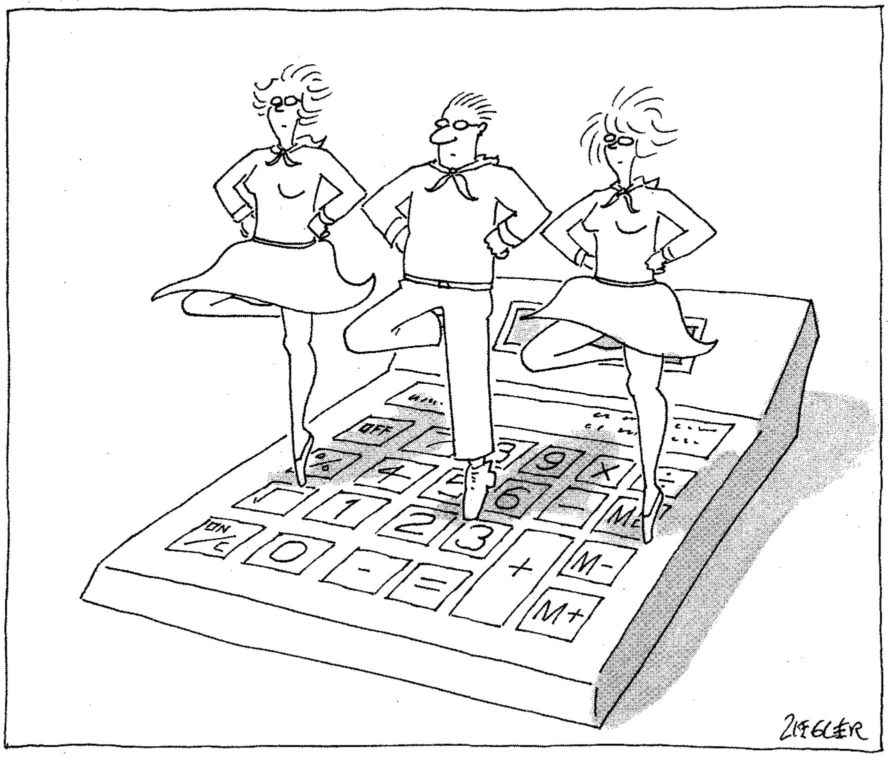
Rumsfeld's response to Schmidt was similar to his expressed surprise over Taguba's Abu Ghraib report. "Rummy did what we called 'case law' policy—verbal and not in writing," Taguba said. "What he's really saying is that if this decision comes back to haunt me I'll deny it."

Taguba eventually concluded that there was a reason for the evasions and stonewalling by Rumsfeld and his aides. At the time he filed his report, in March of 2004, Taguba said, "I knew there was C.I.A. involvement, but I was oblivious of what else was happening" in terms of covert military-intelligence operations. Later that summer, however, he learned that the C.I.A. had serious concerns about the abusive interrogation techniques that military-intelligence operatives were using on high-value detainees. In one secret memorandum, dated June 2, 2003, General George Casey, Jr., then the director of the Joint Staff in the Pentagon, issued a warning to General Michael DeLong, at the Central Command:

> CIA has advised that the techniques the military forces are using to interrogate high value detainees (HVDs) . . . are more aggressive than the techniques used by CIA who is [sic] interviewing the same HVDs.

DeLong replied to Casey that the techniques in use were "doctrinally appropriate techniques," in accordance with Army regulations and Rumsfeld's direction.

IRISH STEP ACCOUNTING



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THE TASK FORCES

Abu Ghraib had opened the door on the issue of the treatment of detainees, and from the beginning the Administration feared that the publicity would expose more secret operations and practices. Shortly after September 11th, Rumsfeld, with the support of President Bush, had set up military task forces whose main target was the senior leadership of Al Qaeda. Their essential tactic was seizing and interrogating terrorists and suspected terrorists; they also had authority from the President to kill certain high-value targets on sight. The most secret task-force operations were categorized as Special Access Programs, or S.A.P.s.

The military task forces were under the control of the Joint Special Operations Command, the branch of the Special Operations Command that is responsible for counterterrorism. One of Miller's unacknowledged missions had been to bring the J.S.O.C.'s "strategic interrogation" techniques to Abu Ghraib. In special cases, the task forces could bypass the chain of command and deal directly with Rumsfeld's office. A former senior intelligence official told me that the White House was also briefed on task-force operations.

The former senior intelligence official said that when the images of Abu Ghraib were published, there were some in the Pentagon and the White House who "didn't think the photographs were that bad"—in that they put the focus on enlisted soldiers, rather than on secret task-force operations. Referring to the task-force members, he said, "Guys on the inside ask me, 'What's the difference between shooting a guy on the street, or in his bed, or in a prison?' " A Pentagon consultant on the war on terror also said that the "basic strategy was 'prosecute the kids in the photographs but protect the big picture.' "

A recently retired C.I.A. officer, who served more than fifteen years in the clandestine service, told me that the task-force teams "had full authority to whack—to go in and conduct 'executive action,' " the phrase for political assassination. "It was surrealistic what these guys were doing," the retired operative added. "They were running around the world without clearing their operations with the ambassador or the chief of station."

J.S.O.C.'s special status undermined

"Well, yes, it's a routine procedure— if you routinely have someone slice open your body with sharp instruments and then fiddle with your insides."

• •

military discipline. Richard Armitage, the former Deputy Secretary of State, told me that, on his visits to Iraq, he increasingly found that "the commanders would say one thing and the guys in the field would say, 'I don't care what he says. I'm going to do what I want.' We've sacrificed the chain of command to the notion of Special Operations and GWOT"—the global war on terrorism. "You're painting on a canvas so big that it's hard to comprehend," Armitage said.

Thomas W. O'Connell, who resigned this spring after nearly four years as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, defended the task forces. He blamed the criticisms on the resentment of the rest of the military: "From my observation, the operations run by Special Ops units are extraordinarily open in terms of inter-agency visibility to embassies and C.I.A. stations—even to the point where there's been a question of security." O'Connell said that he dropped in unannounced to Special Operations interrogation centers in Iraq, "and the treatment of detainees was aboveboard." He added, "If people want to say we've got a serious problem with Special Operations, let them say it on the record."

Representative Obey told me that he had been troubled, before the Iraq war, by the Administration's decision to run clandestine operations from the Pentagon, saying that he "found some of the things they were doing to be disquieting." At the time, his Republican colleagues blocked his attempts to have the House Appropriations Committee investigate these activities. "One of the things that bugs me is that Congress has failed in its oversight abilities," Obey said. Early last year, at his urging, his subcommittee began demanding a classified quarterly report on the operations, but Obey said that he has no reason to believe that the reports are complete.

A former high-level Defense Department official said that, when the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, Senator John Warner, then the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, was warned "to back off" on the investigation, because "it would spill over to more important things." A spokesman for Warner acknowledged that there had been pressure on the Senator, but said that Warner had stood up to it—insisting on putting Rumsfeld under oath for his May 7th testimony, for example, to the Secretary's great displeasure.

An aggressive congressional inquiry into Abu Ghraib could have provoked unwanted questions about what the Pentagon was doing, in Iraq and elsewhere, and under what authority. By law, the President must make a formal finding authorizing a C.I.A. covert operation, and inform the senior leadership of the House and the Senate Intelligence Committees. However, the Bush Administration unilaterally determined after 9/11 that intelligence operations conducted by the military—including the Pentagon's covert task forces—for the purposes of "preparing the battlefield" could be authorized by the President, as Commander-in-Chief, without telling Congress.

There was coördination between the C.I.A. and the task forces, but also tension. The C.I.A. officers, who were under pressure to produce better intelligence in the field, wanted explicit legal authority before aggressively interrogating high-value targets. A finding would give operatives some legal protection for questionable actions, but the White House was reluctant to put what it wanted in writing.

A recently retired high-level C.I.A. official, who served during this period and was involved in the drafting of findings, described to me the bitter disagreements between the White House and the agency over the issue. "The problem is what constituted approval," the retired C.I.A. official said. "My people fought about this all the time. Why should we put our people on the firing line somewhere down the road? If you want me to kill Joe Smith, just *tell* me to kill Joe Smith. If I was the Vice-President or the President, I'd say, 'This guy Smith is a bad guy and it's in the interest of the United States for this guy to be killed.' They don't say that. Instead, George"—George Tenet, the director of the C.I.A. until mid-2004—"goes to the White House and is told, 'You guys are professionals. You know how important it is. We know you'll get the intelligence.' George would come back and say to us, 'Do what you gotta do.'"

Bill Harlow, a spokesman for Tenet, depicted as "absurd" the notion that the C.I.A. director told his agents to operate outside official guidelines. He added, in an e-mailed statement, "The intelligence community insists that its officers not exceed the very explicit authorities granted." In his recently published memoir, however, Tenet acknowledged that there had been a struggle "to get clear guidance" in terms of how far to go during high-value-detainee interrogations.

The Pentagon consultant said in an interview late last year that "the C.I.A. never got the exact language it wanted."

The findings, when promulgated by the White House, were "very calibrated" to minimize political risk, and limited to a few countries; later, they were expanded, turning several nations in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia into free-fire zones with regard to high-value targets. I was told by the former senior intelligence official and a government consultant that after the existence of secret C.I.A. prisons in Europe was revealed, in the Washington *Post*, in late 2005, the Administration responded with a new detainee center in Mauritania. After a new government friendly to the U.S. took power, in a bloodless coup d'état in August, 2005, they said, it was much easier for the intelligence community to mask secret flights there.

"The dirt and secrets are in the back channel," the former senior intelligence officer noted. "All this open business—sitting in staff meetings, etc., etc.—is the Potemkin Village stuff. And the good guys—like Taguba—are gone."

In some cases, the secret operations remained unaccountable. In an April, 2005, memorandum, a C.I.D. officer—his name was redacted—complained to C.I.D. headquarters, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, about the impossibility of investigating military members of a Special Access Program suspected of prisoner abuse:

> [C.I.D.] has been unable to thoroughly investigate . . . due to the suspects and witnesses involvement in Special Access Programs (SAP) and/or the security classification of the unit they were assigned to during the offense under investigation. Attempts by Special Agents . . . to be "read on" to these programs has [sic] been unsuccessful.

The C.I.D. officer wrote that "fake names were used" by members of the task force; he also told investigators that the unit had a "major computer malfunction which resulted in them losing 70 per cent of their files; therefore, they can't find the cases we need to review."

The officer concluded that the investigation "does not need to be reopened. Hell, even if we reopened it we wouldn't get any more information than we already have."

CONSEQUENCES

Rumsfeld was vague, in his appearances before Congress, about when he had informed the President about Abu Ghraib, saying that it could have been late January or early February. He explained that he routinely met with the President "once or twice a week . . . and I don't keep notes about what I do." He did remember that in mid-March he and General Myers were "meeting with the President and discussed the reports that we had obviously heard" about Abu Ghraib.

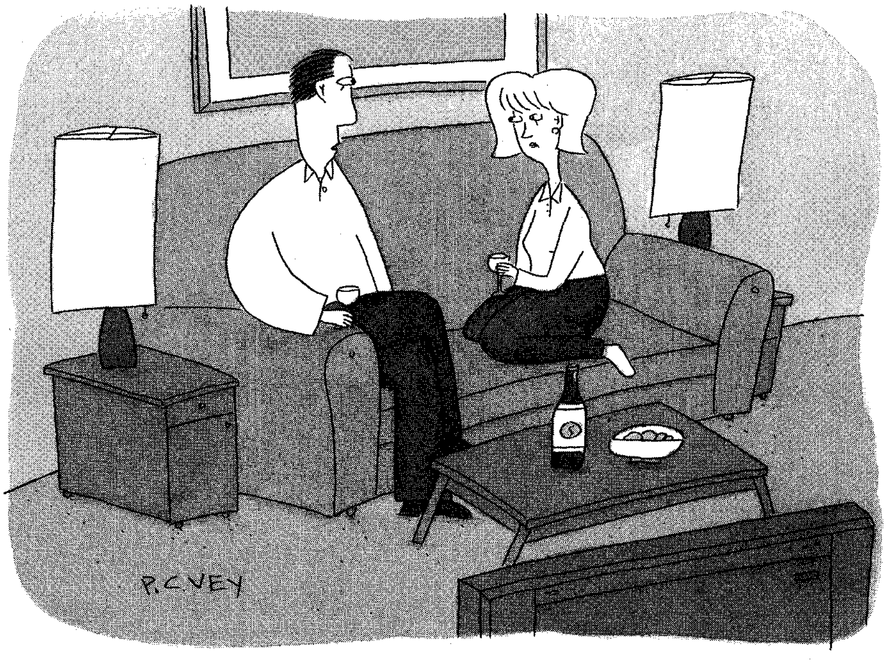
Whether the President was told about Abu Ghraib in January (when e-mails informed the Pentagon of the seriousness of the abuses and of the existence of photographs) or in March (when Taguba filed his report), Bush made no known effort to forcefully address the treatment of prisoners before the scandal became public, or to reëvaluate the training of military police and interrogators, or the practices of the task forces that he had authorized. Instead, Bush acquiesced in the prosecution of a few lower-level soldiers. The President's failure to act decisively resonated through the military chain of command: aggressive prosecution of crimes against detainees was not conducive to a successful career.

In January of 2006, Taguba received a telephone call from General Richard Cody, the Army's Vice-Chief of Staff. "This is your Vice," he told Taguba. "I need you to retire by January of 2007." No pleasantries were exchanged, although the two generals had known each other for years, and, Taguba said, "He offered no reason." (A spokesperson for Cody said, "Conversations regarding general officer management are considered private personnel discussions. General Cody has great respect for Major General Taguba as an officer, leader, and American patriot.")

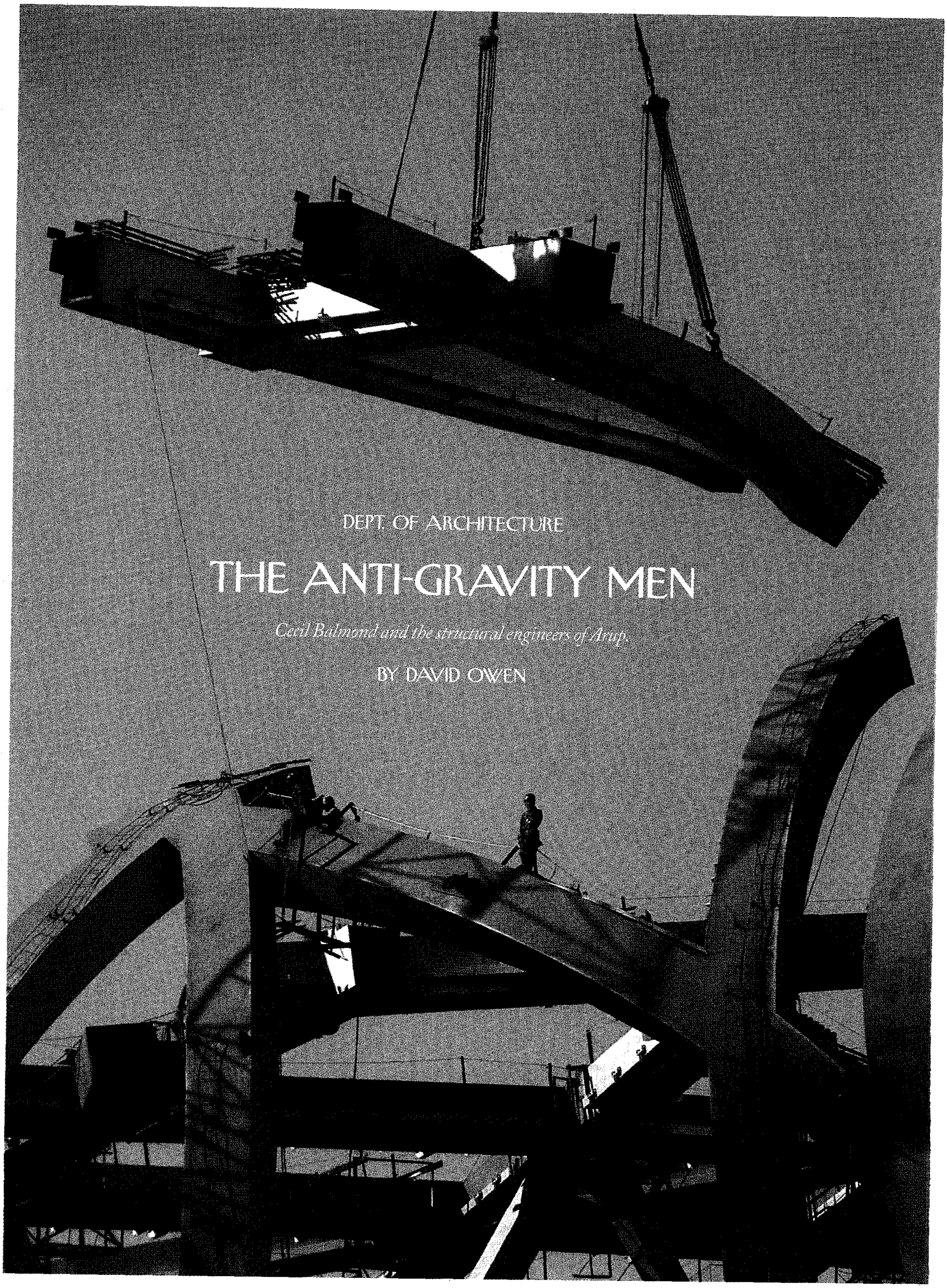
"They always shoot the messenger," Taguba told me. "To be accused of being overzealous and disloyal—that cuts deep into me. I was being ostracized for doing what I was asked to do."

Taguba went on, "There was no doubt in my mind that this stuff"—the explicit images—"was gravitating upward. It was standard operating procedure to assume that this had to go higher. The President had to be aware of this." He said that Rumsfeld, his senior aides, and the high-ranking generals and admirals who stood with him as he misrepresented what he knew about Abu Ghraib had failed the nation.

"From the moment a soldier enlists, we inculcate loyalty, duty, honor, integrity, and selfless service," Taguba said. "And yet when we get to the senior-officer level we forget those values. I know that my peers in the Army will be mad at me for speaking out, but the fact is that we violated the laws of land warfare in Abu Ghraib. We violated the tenets of the Geneva Convention. We violated our own principles and we violated the core of our military values. The stress of combat is not an excuse, and I believe, even today, that those civilian and military leaders responsible should be held accountable." ♦



"I don't want to be defined by who I am."



DEPT. OF ARCHITECTURE

THE ANTI-GRAVITY MEN

Cecil Balmond and the structural engineers of Arup.

BY DAVID OWEN

LIU JIANFENG/CHINAFOTOPRESS; IWAN BAAN/HERZOG & DE MEURON

The most striking feature of Tate Modern—the huge art museum in a converted power station on the south bank of the Thames, in London—is the Turbine Hall, a cathedral-like space five hundred feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and a hundred and fifteen feet tall. Each year, the Tate invites an artist to create a monumental piece specifically for the hall. When, a few years ago, this commission was given to Anish Kapoor, whose works include "Cloud Gate," a hundred-and-ten-ton kidney-shaped stainless-steel sculpture in Chicago's Millennium Park, he did something that artists don't usually do: he hired a structural engineer.

The man he chose was Cecil Balmond, who is a trustee of Arup, an international engineering firm based in London. Arup has offices in thirty-seven countries, and its engineers are, at any moment, involved in several thousand large projects worldwide—a six-lane expressway in Singapore, a master plan for a new city in China, an automotive redesign in the United Kingdom, the long-awaited Second Avenue subway line in Manhattan. Balmond is sixty-four. He has a disarming, slightly gap-toothed smile and a trim gray chinstrap beard, which he uses as a pointing device and rhetorical aid. He dresses as casually as a literature professor, and when he thinks about something difficult he runs a hand over his head, the top of which is bald. He is a talented musician and, early in his career, considered leaving Arup to make his living as a classical guitarist.

Kapoor was used to working with full-time assistants, but he came to feel an unusual imaginative harmony with Balmond. "The traditional role of the engineer is to perform, so to speak, the ideas of the architect, or of the artist, or whatever," Kapoor told me not long ago. "But Cecil and I decided, quite clearly, that we were going to put that aside and invent together." For five months, the two men spent half the week in an Arup office in London, engaged in a sort of high-level play date. They would sit at a table and sketch, while the Advanced Geometry Unit—a small engineering, architecture, and research practice that Balmond has set up within Arup—used computers to explore the structural ramifications of their ideas. Computer science has revolutionized work at many engineering firms, but Balmond feels that design software is often used lazily or for mere effect, whereas he hopes that the A.G.U., which he calls "an investigation into a new aesthetic," can make rational principles the basis for generating designs. During the planning for the Tate piece, one team member modified a video game so that Kapoor and Balmond, wearing 3-D glasses, could navigate a simulated Turbine Hall. The A.G.U. turned promising ideas into prototypes using a machine that lays down thin layers of a rapidly hardening liquid polymer, like a three-dimensional printer, to convert computer drawings into solid objects.

The resulting work, which Kapoor named "Marsyas," after the satyr who challenged Apollo to a flute-playing contest and was flayed for his hubris, was a four-hundred-and-sixty-foot-long attenuated tubular form made from twenty thousand square yards of blood-red PVC fabric. The material was stretched between three massive steel rings—two standing vertically at either end of the hall and the third hovering horizontally in the middle. The weight of the center ring pulled the entire membrane into high tension, and the piece looked like a tremendous uncoiled trumpet with three bells and no mouthpiece. "Marsyas" was designed to seem as if it had had to be squeezed into the hall, and its shape was so complex that Arup had to write new software to predict how the finished skin would behave when it was stretched. Fabric has often been used in architecture, usually in roofs or canopies, but it is generally a secondary element, supported by cables, trusses, or other structural components. In "Marsyas," by contrast, the membrane was the structure.

The piece was erected in the Turbine Hall by a large team of professional riggers, some of whom used rock-climbing gear to dangle from the roof. The job took more than a week, and was completed just an hour or two before the exhibition's opening cocktail party. The huge red central orifice floated ominously above a pedestrian bridge, like a spaceship preparing to land, or like an enormous mouth about to make a meal of the crowd beneath. There was much speculation about what was holding it up. Michael Hopkins, an architect who has made a specialty of fabric structures, asked Balmond where the supporting cables were. The Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid, who in 2004 became the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, speculated that the red skin was made of steel; Balmond took Hadid aside and told her to punch it.

Balmond has achieved a great reputation as a structural engineer, but his most exceptional talent may be a sort of genius for collaboration. During the past twenty years, he has worked with Philip Johnson, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, James Stirling, Ben van Berkel, Toyo Ito, and several other celebrated architects. These are all powerful figures, with very different personalities and architectural styles, yet Balmond has managed to work productively with all of them. Johnson, who was born some four decades before Balmond, called him a mentor. Koolhaas told me recently that he and Balmond are able to engage in "a kind of telepathic communication, almost." Ito has often said that his first building with Balmond, in 2002, changed the course of his career, and he told me that the "meaning and influence" of Balmond's work is comparable to that of Le Corbusier's seminal 1923 manifesto, "Vers une Architecture."

A characteristic Balmond collaboration was the Portuguese National Pavilion for Expo '98, in Lisbon, where he worked with Álvaro Siza, who is often described as Portugal's greatest architect. The pavilion consists of a simple two-story box with a large covered entrance plaza at one end. The plaza measures an acre and a half, and Balmond originally thought of covering it with a thin metal canopy. He worried, though, that this might be too insubstantial for the pavilion's harborside location and that it might seem out of character with Siza's other work. He had a different idea: What about a thin, curving sheet

Previous page: construction on the Beijing National Stadium, one of Arup's many projects for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

of concrete, suspended above the plaza like a broad hammock? Siza, incredulous, asked whether unsupported concrete could really be used over such a span. Balmond said that it could. An eminent Portuguese engineer disagreed, and told the building authorities that the canopy would crack catastrophically. “That was a difficult moment, because this was a very good person,” Balmond told me. “So I got a young guy from my team, from Australia, and we spent two months analyzing that simple sheet, proving that there wasn’t a problem.”

The pavilion’s concrete canopy weighs nearly two thousand tons and is just seven inches thick. It is suspended between two points at the same elevation, forming a curve called a catenary (from the Latin for “chain.”) The slab is reinforced by internal steel tendons, which were stretched, like piano strings, after the concrete had set, to create a permanent compressive force along the slab’s ends, in a technique called post-tensioning. Balmond had determined that it would be possible to cast the canopy as a flat sheet on the ground and then hoist it into place after it had hardened, allowing gravity to bend it into the desired shape, but he ultimately decided that it should be cast in place. He was in Lisbon the day the wooden forms were removed from the concrete, and as he walked toward the site he was joined by a group of Swedish architecture students. When the floating concrete sheet came into view, one of the students gasped, and Balmond did, too. The canopy conveys both terrific mass and implausible lightness; it is joined to the two abutments that support it by comblike arrays of steel-clad tendons, and when you stand in the plaza below and look up you see an exhilarating stripe of daylight at either end. “Good collaboration is an art,” Balmond told me. “It’s better than the two of you separately. The metal canopy idea was inappropriate for Siza, somehow, yet concrete isn’t something that I would have thought of first, if I had been alone.”

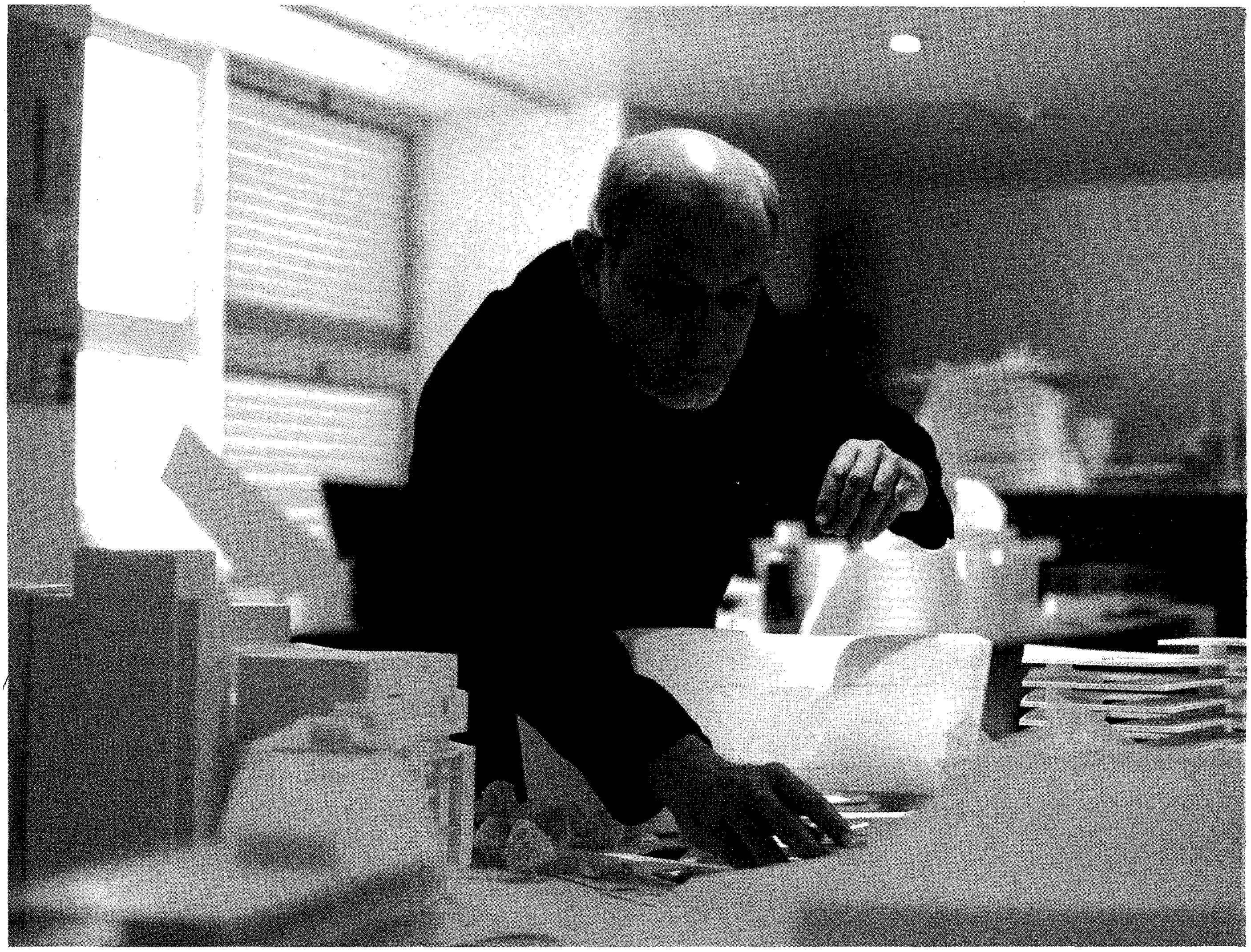
“My child’s school is having an auction, so can your entire life come to a halt?”

• •

Balmond has a complexly collaborative background. He was born in 1943 in Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon, and has both Sinhalese and European ancestors. One great-grandfather on his father’s side was a railroad worker from England married to an Irishwoman (whom Cecil’s father called White Granny). His father, a benign but imposing figure, was the first member of the family to earn a college degree. He was a European-history professor at the University of Ceylon, and was promoted to a high administrative position when Balmond was a boy. The family moved from a small house on an unpaved street to a large house on a hill on the campus, and Balmond’s parents became prominent cultural and social figures. “All the big dignitaries who visited Sri Lanka came to our home,” Balmond told me. “I met Nehru. I met Zhou Enlai—who was a very good ballroom dancer. My mother also danced with William Holden, who was doing ‘Bridge on the River Kwai,’ and she talked about that for years. One night, I looked out the window and saw car headlights shining up, toward the sky, and my father sent some people down to investigate. They found Sir David Lean, who had had too much to drink and had driven off the road, and they brought him up to the house.”

Growing ethnic tensions in Ceylon in the late fifties eventually cost Balmond’s father his job: he had pale skin and blue-green eyes; he wasn’t a native speaker of Sinhalese, the language of the country’s Buddhist majority; and he was a Christian. He and his wife moved to Nigeria in 1960, and he served as a senior administrator at the University of Ibadan. Cecil, whose coloring is darker, remained in Ceylon for another year and a half, and then joined his parents in Ibadan and enrolled in the university. “I learned a lot about three-dimensional thinking in Nigeria,” he told me one afternoon in London. “I had a Senegalese maths professor, who put pictures in my head that I hadn’t had before. It was just stunning. Something was triggered, and I felt a new spatial awareness. Africa was intoxicating, too. I had come from a small country, an island, and Africa was infinite. It gave me a different sense of space.” He also met the woman he later married, Shirley Rogers, the daughter of an American geology professor.

Balmond eventually decided that he would need to go to England to complete his education. He enrolled at the University of Southampton, and earned a degree in civil engineering there in 1965, when he was twenty-two. He then returned to Nigeria, and got a job at the Arup office in Ibadan. In 1967, the Biafran war forced him to leave the country—his second exile in seven years—and he joined the Arup office in London.



Collaboration is a key concept at Arup and central to the way Balmond works. Rem Koolhaas says that he and Balmond are able t

“Arup” looks like an industrial acronym, but it’s the surname of the firm’s founder, Ove Nyquist Arup, who was born in England in 1895 to a Danish father and a Norwegian mother, and was educated mainly in Germany and Denmark. (“Ove” rhymes with “rove”; the stressed syllable in “Arup” is the first.) In 1938, back in England, Ove and his cousin Arne went into business as Arup & Arup, Ltd., Civil Engineers and Contractors, and after the war Ove struck out on his own, creating the firm that exists today. His biography—“Ove Arup: Masterbuilder of the Twentieth Century,” by Peter Jones (2006)—reveals him to have been a sort of brilliant goofball. He wore a beret, played the accordion, doodled constantly, wrote excruciating light verse, and carried a pair of chopsticks in the breast pocket of his jacket so that he could snatch food from other people’s plates. He was also an excellent engineer.

The defining project of Ove’s career was the Sydney Opera House, in Australia. That building, which appears near the top of almost any list of modern architectural masterpieces, sits on a promontory in Sydney Harbor and resembles an opening white blossom, or a jumbled cascade of cockle shells. It was designed by Jørn Utzon, a young, visionary, temperamental architect from Denmark, who won the design competition, in 1957, despite having submitted little more than dazzling sketches. The judges were concerned about Utzon’s inexperience but believed that he would be able to handle the job if supported by a team of experienced collaborators—among them Ove Arup.

Nine years later, the building remained far from complete, and Utzon resigned under circumstances that are still disputed. The main issues were spiralling costs and Utzon’s alienation of most of the people on the project. That the Sydney Opera House eventually got built is largely a credit to Ove’s firm. To solve the many unique technical challenges posed by the roof shells—the most recognizable and structurally audacious feature of the design—the firm built a computer center in the basement of its London offices. Even then, completing the calculations and testing the designs took four years. Balmond, who had joined the firm as a new university graduate in 1966, wasn’t involved in the project, but he remembers it. “The computers were this high,” he told me, holding his hand above shoulder height, “and I remember the big tape reels, and the huge diodes burning away. It was very, very impressive, and so was the result. That project is where the firm's confidence came from. With the opera house, Arup extended the hypothesis of architecture."

Ove died in 1988, at the age of ninety-two, but he is still a presence. A talk that he gave to his partners in 1970 is referred to at the firm as "the key speech" and is required reading for all new employees. In it, Ove explores themes that constitute a sort of mission statement: the importance of working noncompetitively with colleagues, of engaging in interesting, useful, and morally responsible work, and of pursuing "total architecture," in which structural, aesthetic, human, and environmental considerations are treated as parts of a whole. In a related lecture, Ove said, "By creating a model fraternity, so to speak, we make a contribution to what is almost the central problem of our time: how to overcome the social friction and strife which threatens to overwhelm mankind. We could become a small-scale experiment in how to live and work happily together."

engage in "a telepathic communication, almost."

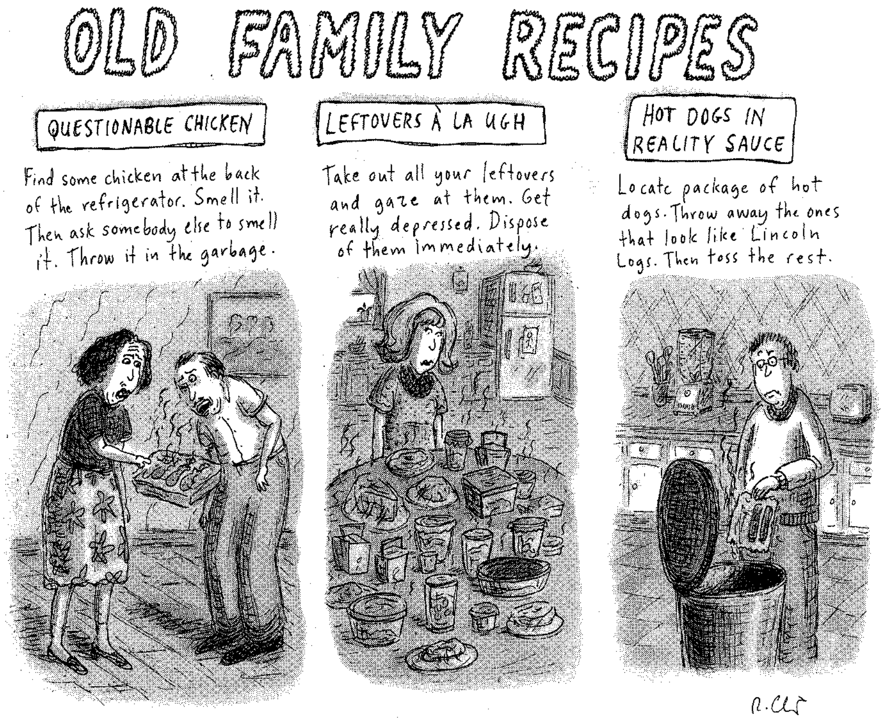
THOMAS GRAHAM

Today, one conspicuous manifestation of the fraternal approach is the company's internal computer network, known as Ovanet. Among its features is a large collection of technical forums, covering most of the firm's many specialties and subspecialties. An engineer in the Arup office in Darussalam, Brunei, say, can post a question in the appropriate Ovanet forum about the bending moment of a particular loaded beam, and be reasonably certain that, overnight, the problem will be taken up sequentially by colleagues in Arup offices around the world.

The firm has grown substantially since Ove's death, but it has done so in the manner he prescribed, by expanding horizontally into related fields, and by following the passions of the engineers, who are encouraged to create absorbing projects for themselves. Arup is a privately held trust, operated for the benefit of its employees, and its leaders don't brood about short-term financial results. (The firm had revenues of eight hundred and twenty-six million dollars in 2006, and profits of sixty-one million.) Terry Hill, who since 2004 has held the title of chairman, a position that rotates fairly frequently, told me, "Just the week before last, I went to meet a group of this year's intake of university graduates—globally, I think, we hired three hundred or four hundred—and I said to them, 'There are not many layers between you and me.' And there aren't. That's something that amazed me when I was younger in Arup's, how one week I'd be working for somebody and the next week he'd be working for me. To a great extent, it's a company of equals."

A young architect can become famous right out of school with a competition design for a building, even if it is never built; engineers gestate longer. Balmond's first big project was a brewery in Northampton, built in 1970. (His supervisor was Ove Arup himself.) During the next fifteen years, Balmond worked on jobs of gradually increasing complexity, and was posted in England, Germany, Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. His thinking about structure and design began to move toward its mature form in the late eighties, at around the time that he first worked with Koolhaas, who was at a similar stage in the development of his ideas. Their first major design together was a competition entry for The Hague City Hall, in the Netherlands, in 1986. Their submission, an innovative all-steel building, was selected (but never built), and they discovered that they enjoyed collaborating. "We grew up together, really, experimenting with different things," Balmond told me. "Rem found architecture wanting, and I found the whole work of structural engineering wanting." The link between Arup and Koolhaas's firm—which is called the Office of Metropolitan Architecture, or OMA, and is based in Rotterdam—has grown stronger since then, and at least a few members of each firm can now almost always be found in the offices of the other. Koolhaas told me, "I would say without any hesitation that part of the character of our firm is determined by the collaboration, and that the collaboration has enabled us to think about architecture in a different way. Our best work is kind of a hybrid between architecture and engineering." For the past twenty years, most of OMA's major buildings have been Arup collaborations.

From Balmond's point of view, one of the most significant of the OMA-Arup projects was one of the smallest, a private house on a hilltop in Bordeaux, France, which was completed in 1998. The client had been paralyzed in an automobile accident, and the design goal was to create a house that, in symbolic compensation, would seem to "fly." The top floor of the house, containing the bedrooms, is essentially a concrete box, and Koolhaas and Balmond both felt that supporting it on conventional columns, like the legs of a table, would seem too terrestrial and static. Balmond devised a more structurally daring approach, which he called "a levitation." One end of the box rests on a shelf beam, dramatically offset from the building's centerline; the other end hangs from a huge cantilevered girder,


OLD FAMILY RECIPES
QUESTIONABLE CHICKEN
Find some chicken at the back of the refrigerator. Smell it. Then ask somebody else to smell it. Throw it in the garbage.
LEFTOVERS À LA UGH
Take out all your leftovers and gaze at them. Get really depressed. Dispose of them immediately.
HOT DOGS IN REALITY SAUCE
Locate package of hot dogs. Throw away the ones that look like Lincoln Logs. Then toss the rest.

which appears to be resting on top of the box but actually is holding it up. The girder is invisibly supported by a cylindrical concrete core that rises through the house, and the weight of the box is counterbalanced by a massive subterranean block of concrete, connected to the girder by an exposed steel cable. From several angles, the upper level of the house does, indeed, appear to be rising off the ground—like a man lifting himself by pulling his own hair.

The job of an engineer, Balmond told me over dinner in London one night, is to "route gravity through structure." Gravity's path through the Bordeaux house is anything but obvious, just as it wasn't obvious in "Marsyas," and in both cases this ambiguity became a central element in the design. Balmond, in his book "Informal"—which won the 2005 Banister Fletcher Prize, for the year's best book on architecture—presents the Bordeaux house as an archetypal example of his desire to be released from what he has called "the Cartesian cage": the formal, gridlike arrangement of columns and beams on which almost all construction relies. "Why not skip a beat?" he writes. "Incline the vertical, slope the horizontal. Or allow two adjacent lines of columns to slip past each other. Let space entertain us. Let's see other possibilities, other configurations of how buildings may be framed and stabilized."

Balmond has a weakness for dreamy jargon. He uses the words "instinct," "intuition," "tectonic," and "forensic" in senses that aren't always easy to reconcile with dictionary definitions—a habit that may be a product of the time he has spent as a visiting professor at a number of universities. Among his favorite words are "deliberate" and "rigorous," which he uses mainly when talking about design decisions that arise from something deeper than decoration. Building, for him, is inseparable from structure, and he can be dismissive of architecture in which, for example, an arbitrarily unconventional façade has been applied to a conventional frame.

Balmond and the A.G.U., in addition to their building projects, spend a considerable amount of time doing pure research, in mathematical and scientific areas that don't have obvious architectural applications. Last fall, the A.G.U. and a group of students Balmond teaches at the University of Pennsylvania put on an exhibition at Artists Space, in SoHo. The main work in the show was a large structure that had had its genesis in a chance discussion about the feasibility of the legendary "Indian rope trick"—in which a boy appears to climb an unsupported rope thrown into the air. In the A.G.U.'s version, several thousand laser-cut aluminum plates are connected by steel chains in such a way that the plates appear to be hanging from the chains. In fact, the chains are placed in tension by their attachment to the plates, so that the two together act as rigid columns: the chains hold up the plates, which hold up the chains.

An especially productive laboratory for Balmond's ideas has been a series of temporary pavilions in Kensington Gardens, in London, commissioned annually since 2000 by the Serpentine Gallery. Each pavilion was designed by a prominent architect who had not worked in the United Kingdom previously, and Balmond and his Arup colleagues have been involved in seven of the eight so far. The pavilions were small—just a few thousand square feet each—and the engineers and architects (including Hadid, Koolhaas, Libeskind, and Siza) worked without fees, but the designs were memorable, and the series had a disproportionate impact on architects all over the world. The pavilions' modest size, and the fact that each had a planned life span of only a few months, enabled the designers to try ideas that might have been considered too risky or impractical if proposed on a larger scale. Perhaps the most striking of the Serpentine pavilions was the third, which was designed by Toyo Ito and Balmond. Ito had said that he wanted to build "a box that is not a box," and he proposed a rectangular building that would have an orderly colonnade around the perimeter but roof beams positioned randomly, as though scattered from above. Balmond disapproved. "It just didn't look right," he said last fall, in a well-attended lecture at Cooper Union, in New York. "It looked precious, in a way."

The pavilion as it was built was a typically Balmondesque transformation of the architect's original concept. Balmond began by drawing a square. Then he superimposed a second square, somewhat smaller and turned slightly askew, and then a third square, and so on, until he had filled the sheet. Then he extended all the lines until they reached the edges of his sketchbook. When he finished, the page looked like a pane of glass fractured into asymmetrical triangles and other polygons, but the underlying pattern was actually regular: a spiralled square. For the pavilion, Balmond and Ito folded the pattern to form a box, turned the lines into steel plates, and filled in roughly half of the polygonal openings with panels. The interior looked a little like a three-dimensional projection from a broken kaleidoscope—a box that, to people sitting at café tables inside it, didn't appear to be a box. The building was described by the *Financial Times* as "one of the most beautiful and delicate structures seen in London in recent years," and its effect on Ito was profound. Many of the buildings he has designed since then have clearly been influenced by it. "Through this project," he told me recently, "I learned to develop fluid spaces using a new kind of geometry."

For Balmond, the Ito Serpentine pavilion was a telling example of what he calls the power of algorithm, of a simple mathematical rule repeatedly applied. Nature builds structure algorithmically—one cell becomes two, two become four, four become eight—and Balmond allowed the pavilion's design to generate itself in an analogous way. He believes that employing algorithms can help a designer circumvent what he calls the built-in "aesthetic bias" of any human creator, and arrive at structures that he would otherwise not have thought of. A member of the A.G.U. who worked on the pavilion told me that the load path created by the algorithm had serendipitously turned out to be just as efficient as a traditional grid: despite its apparent complexity, the pavilion stood up by itself and was easy to construct. During assembly, a workman, using wooden blocks, propped up one of the corners, which looked precarious to him because it didn't touch the ground—entirely unnecessarily, as Balmond was able to show him by kicking away the blocks.

Last November, Balmond travelled to Tokyo to give a lecture at the opening of a museum retrospective marking the thirty-fifth year of Ito's career. After the event, he flew to China to check up on several of the many large Arup projects under way there—no engineering firm has had a bigger influence on the changing Asian skyline—and I met him in Beijing. During the week of my visit, the smog became so thick that flights were delayed, sections of five expressways were closed, outdoor activities were discouraged, and buildings a block distant were visible only as dim silhouettes in the brown miasma. "This is unusual for November," a resident told me. "Ordinarily, it only gets like this in August." August, incidentally, is the month of the Summer Olympics, which are coming to Beijing in 2008.

The Olympics have accelerated what was already a citywide construction boom. Huge new buildings are going up everywhere, and various Arup teams have worked on most of the biggest ones, including the Beijing National Stadium, designed by the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, which looks like an upside-down woven-steel basket and has become known as the Bird's Nest. Next to the stadium is another Olympic venue, the National Aquatics Center, also known as the Water Cube. The building was inspired by the way bubbles pack together in foam, and its unique, nonlinear skeleton was engineered by an Arup team. At the airport, Arup is working on a huge new terminal and a light-rail station, both designed by Norman Foster, and in downtown Beijing it created the structural design for a new office tower at the World Trade Center complex, which, at more than a thousand feet, will be the tallest building in the city. The firm's biggest Beijing project is the striking new headquarters building of CCTV, China Central Television, now under construction. The building, which will look a little like a huge, angular steel-and-glass doughnut, was designed by Rem Koolhaas, Ole Scheeren, and OMA in collaboration with Arup, and is probably the most structurally complex large building in the world.

On a chilly day shortly before Thanksgiving, I borrowed a hard hat and accompanied Balmond on a visit to the CCTV construction site, along with Rory McGowan, who is the Arup design-team leader and the project director for the building. McGowan was born in Ireland in 1964, and he has worked for Arup, all over the world, since 1986. He is tall, wears glasses with smallish black frames, and has short, thinning hair. He lives in one of central Beijing's ancient quadrangle houses with his wife, who is Russian, and their two sons, who are five and nine and are able to holler in Mandarin at Chinese people who try to photograph them as ethnic curiosities.

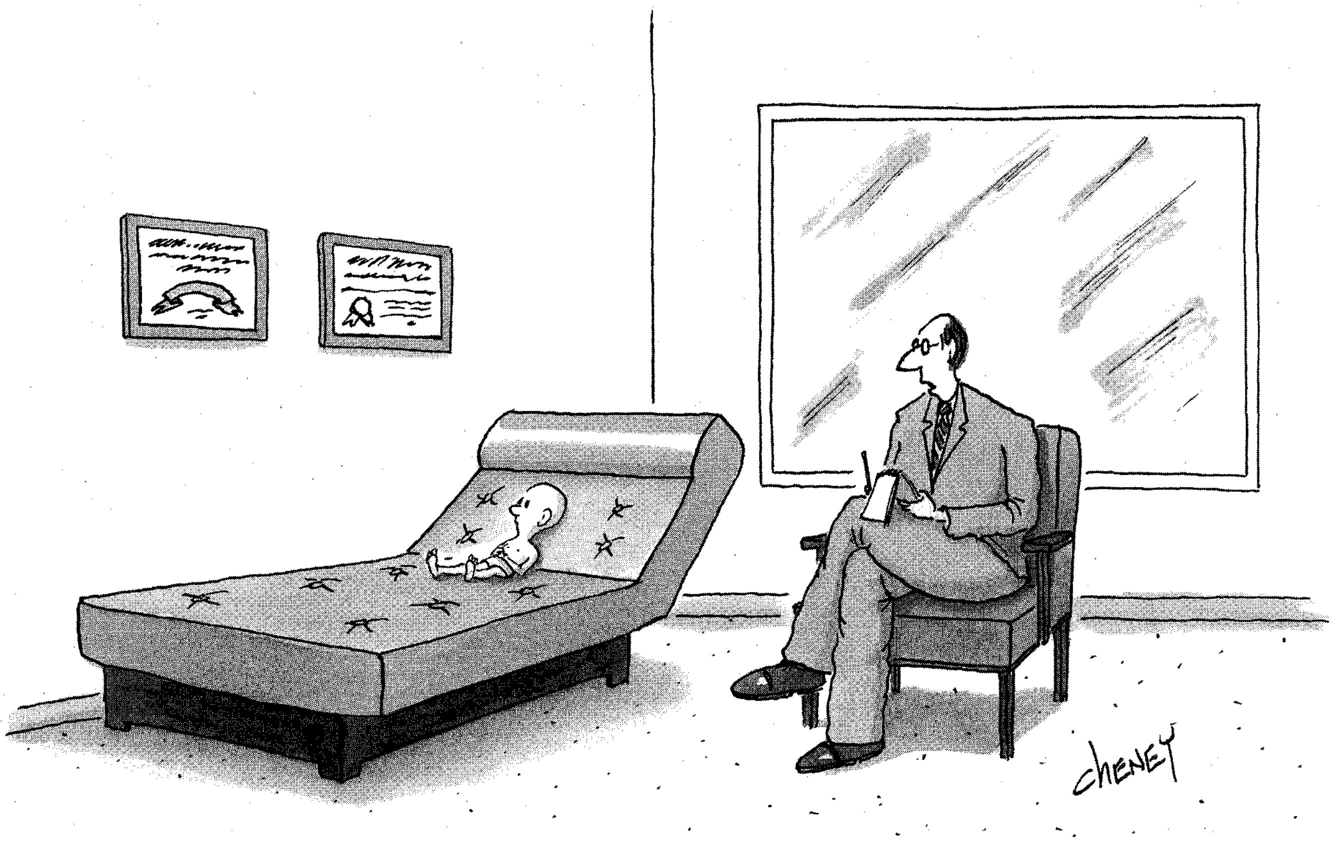
As we drove to the site, Balmond said, "The CCTV tower's structure is a braced tube that acts as a cantilever in one way and as a portal frame in the

"I aspired to authenticity, but I never got beyond verisimilitude."

other." A few days earlier, McGowan had told me much the same thing, but translated into layman's terms: "Basically, the building is trying to fall over." When the CCTV building is completed, it will be around seven hundred and seventy feet tall, with two precipitously leaning towers that meet, five hundred feet above the ground, in a vertiginous L-shaped thirteen-story overhang. More than seventy Arup engineers worked on the structural design, and their task, already daunting, was complicated by the fact that Beijing is situated in a lively seismic zone. A high-level Arup team spent several months simply deciding whether the firm should attach its name to the design-competition entry, McGowan told me. "Then, over the next four or five months, while the contracts were being negotiated, we had a secret team working in the back room which we never told OMA about, because we had to persuade ourselves that the building really was feasible—and achievable in China." One of the challenges was finding ways to spread the building's huge loads over more of the structure, a process that, paradoxically, involved weakening certain areas where especially large forces came to bear. All in all, the design for the building occupied many of Arup's best minds for more than two years.

Our driver took us down a mazelike series of alleys and driveways. Then we left the car and walked through a round steel "moon gate" in an old wall, skirted spaghetti-like bundles of rebar, and passed a parking lot in which a large copper model of the tower stood, left over from a seismic test conducted at the request of Chinese officials, who were particularly unnerved by the overhang. (During the testing and approval phase, the tower was often referred to in the local press as *wei fang*—"dangerous building.") Balmond said that the overhang wasn't actually the primary structural difficulty with the building, because the leaning towers "grip" the suspended stories; McGowan added, "But it's good for people to have something to worry about." The true challenge, both men said, was making the building robust enough to keep it from overturning, without making it insufficiently flexible to withstand a major earthquake. Arup had to create computer programs to simulate how each of the frame's ten thousand joints would respond, millisecond by millisecond, to earthquakes of various intensities. "Once things start moving," Balmond said, "they take up a completely new geometry, and they also take up new properties. The building changes." Parts of the building are designed to deform non-catastrophically during the early stages of a major tremor, like crumple zones in a car.

At the time of our visit, construction had progressed to the eighth floor above grade—which is the eleventh floor if you start counting where engineers do, at the foundation. As we entered the site, McGowan warned me not to walk and look up at the same time—an Arup director once died on a site after stepping backward through an unfenced opening—and to stay clear of any area where I saw welding splats or orange peels on the ground, since they implied the presence of potentially tool-dropping workers in the girders directly above. We crossed a wooden bridge into what will one day be the lobby of Tower No. 2, and Balmond said, "This project was the most frus-



"All righty, then—enough about breasts."

trating one for Rem. When we had a design that we thought would work, Rem asked us if we could confirm it, and we said no, not for nine more months." Toward the end of the design phase, an Arup team in London would upload the project's huge computer files onto Ovanet at the close of each workday, and a second team, in China—whose members were arriving at their offices as their British counterparts were leaving theirs—would take up where the London engineers had left off, bringing fresh minds to the most tenacious problems and enabling Arup to work on the building virtually around the clock.

Keeping the CCTV tower upright begins more than two hundred feet underground, with a vast forest of closely spaced reinforced-concrete piles, each of which is a hundred and sixty feet tall and approximately five feet in diameter. On top of the piles are two concrete "rafts," each of which is as much as twenty-five feet thick and the size of two football fields placed side by side. "They poured the raft under each tower at just about this time last year," McGowan said, as we looked down into the lower levels of the building. "At that time, those were the biggest continuous concrete pours in Chinese building-construction history—something like forty thousand truck movements." Each raft acts partly as a "toe" for the tower above it, to keep it from tipping over, in the same way that your own toes hold you when you lean forward. The structure rising from the rafts will eventually contain more than a hundred thousand metric tons of steel, most of it in the lower half of the building. Massive columns made from four-inch-thick steel plates and encased in reinforced concrete will withstand the huge stresses on the inward-leaning sides of the towers. The columns, which would be able to support a non-tilting skyscraper approximately twice as tall as the Chrysler Building, are fabricated in Shanghai in two-story sections. Each vertical joint requires three full days of precision welding.

The difficulty of the steelwork explains a striking fact about the CCTV construction site on the day we visited: there weren't that many people there. Labor is cheap and plentiful in China, and on most work sites you can see large numbers of unskilled workers carrying small loads slung from poles, sweeping up heartbreakingly tiny piles of construction debris with brooms made of twigs, and transporting bricks a hundred yards by dragging them six at a time on the blade of a shovel. Here the frame of the building can rise only at the pace of the welding, which involves small numbers of the country's most élite steelworkers.

Some of the most challenging welds at CCTV will come at the very end, when the cantilevered arms of the overhang are joined together—like the driving of the golden spike upon the completion of the transcontinental railroad. McGowan's team long ago determined when this union will take place: in late autumn (when the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures is small), at five o'clock in the morning (when the entire structure will have had all night to cool to approximately the same temperature). If the connection were instead made at noon on a summer day, a morning's worth of solar-heat gain would have caused the steel on one side of the building to expand slightly, skewing the structure out of alignment and introducing stresses that could cause trouble later on.

From Beijing, Balmond went on to Shanghai, to inspect the proofs of the Chinese edition of "Informal" and conduct various meetings. (One of Arup's biggest upcoming Asian projects is the creation, from scratch, of a sustainable "eco-city" on an island in the mouth of the Yangtze River, just outside Shanghai.) Virtually all the big new buildings going up in China today were designed by architects from outside the country, and Balmond and McGowan both told me that Arup is committed to training indigenous designers. "We don't know what the model is yet, but we can't just have Western masters coming and going," Balmond said before he left for the airport. "I actually believe that something very interesting will come of it for us, and I think we'll show the West."

Balmond's travel and work schedules are daunting. If he doesn't suffer from chronic jet lag, it's only because he seldom stays long enough in one place to tie his metabolism to any particular time zone. He tends to work to the exclusion of other activities—he ran Arup's Berlin office for four years in the eighties, yet saw the Wall only once, when his wife took him—but he also complicates his overflowing schedule by making himself available to almost anyone who wants to speak with him. In Beijing, Balmond and McGowan spent half an hour talking with a young Chinese engineer who had been employed by Arup a couple of years earlier and needed advice. He was the project manager for a commercial building complex in which a pedestrian bridge would traverse a central courtyard, and he didn't like the architect's conception of the bridge. It seemed too static, he said; he wanted to find some way to make it "float," and he was on a tight deadline because construction had begun.

"The supports are in the wrong places," Balmond concluded, after studying the drawings. "The span is ninety metres, and it needs to be more like a hundred and forty. I think the bridge needs to be a boat sailing through the scheme, or a missile being fired through the scheme." He turned to McGowan. "What's post-tensioned concrete like here?"

"They don't do it," he said.

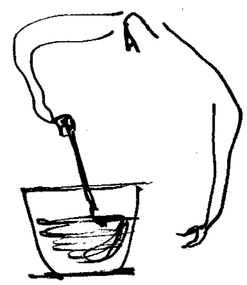
"How about timber?"

"Chinese and Western expectations about finishes are different," he said. "The attitude here is more 'It will do.' It's a cultural difference, and you can see it even in the scaffolding. Steel is safer."

Balmond turned back to the plans and offered additional ideas. Then, characteristically, he asked the Chinese engineer to send a complete set of drawings to him in London so that he could look at them again when he got home.

This level of activity takes a toll. In New York last fall, Balmond ran into a former teaching assistant of his, who is now a visiting professor of architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and agreed to spend an hour with him the following morning. The hour turned into two hours, and the conversation ended only when Balmond's publicist tracked him down and informed him that he had just missed a press conference. As he got up to catch a taxi, I removed a dry cleaner's plastic clip from the collar of his shirt: he had dressed so rapidly that he hadn't noticed it.

In 2004, Balmond's family prevailed on him to take a three-week vacation, his first significant break in years. Two days before Christmas, he and Shirley and their three children, who were in their twenties, travelled to a seaside resort in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, on the Bay of Bengal. They had a family celebration on Christmas night, and stayed up late, talking. The following morning, Balmond was awakened by what he described to me as "the sound of a hundred railway trains bearing down on me." He opened the curtains of his hotel room, expecting to see black clouds and lashing rain, and was surprised to find the sky a deep, beautiful blue. "Our building was about two hundred feet from the sea," he told me, "but the beach and the grass were gone, and everything was black water." This was the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, which killed more than two hundred thousand people, although at the time Balmond had no idea what was happening. His eldest child, John, who had also been awakened by the noise, came into the room, bleary-eyed. Balmond stepped onto an exterior stairway and saw that a power boat had been thrown onto the roof of their building, which was two stories tall, and he learned from a guest in a neighboring room that earlier that morning his two younger children had gone to the beach, which was now under more than ten feet of water.



He rushed back inside. The furniture in the room was shaking, water was coming in through the windows, and waves were breaking over the building. "I still didn't know what this was, but now I have a choice to make: Do we jump? My instincts as an engineer must have come into play, because I looked at the water and judged that the force was too much. Other people were jumping in and being swept away. We saw naked people leaping off the first floor, scrambling onto the roof, climbing into trees. John said, Let's go, let's go! and I said, No, not yet. Then the water eased, and we all held hands and we went in."

They swam and waded inland and, as soon as they reached dry ground, began running toward the jungle, passing dozens of tangled bodies. Suddenly, John spotted his brother's distinctive emerald-colored slippers in a pile of debris. The worst period of Balmond's life began at that moment; it ended an hour later, when John spotted his siblings walking toward them along a road. It turned out that they had fled the beach just ahead of the first wave and had sought shelter initially in the hotel's dining room, where they most likely would have died if a cook, who himself later drowned, hadn't led them to an exit. Of three hundred and fifty people staying or working at the hotel at the time the waves hit, only a hundred and twenty-five survived.

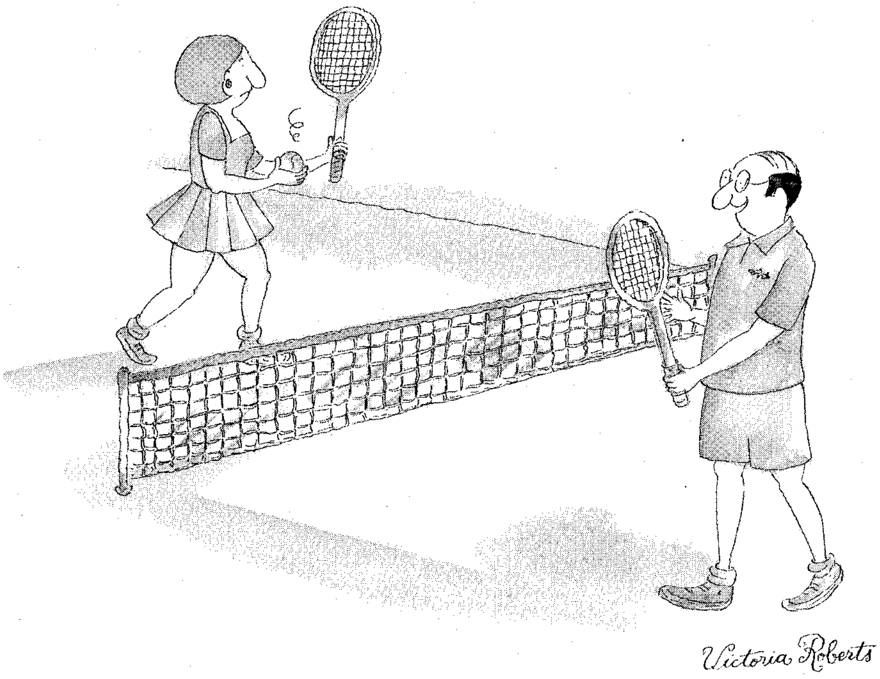
Balmond is now deeply involved in restoration work in Sri Lanka, including a project, partly funded by Arup, to rebuild the university, and he has revisited the country several times and even forced himself to swim again in the Bay of Bengal. But he was unable to talk about his own experience for more than a year. Less than two weeks after the tsunami, he was in the United States, teaching a class at Penn. When I asked him about this, he shrugged and said, "Life had to go on."

At the end of the nineteen-fifties, when Ove Arup approached retirement age, the company's board assigned him an honorary permanent age of sixty-four, allowing him to continue working for as long as he liked. Balmond, who will turn sixty-five in early 2008, has no plans to retire—it's not clear that he could tolerate even semi-retirement—but he says that he intends to shed some of his corporate responsibilities and devote more attention to China, the A.G.U., and teaching. He may also spend more time on smaller, more personal projects. He has a new book, "Element," coming out this summer, and he and the A.G.U. recently completed a footbridge in Coimbra, Portugal, the first project of his career for which he is credited as the architect rather than as the engineer. The bridge is a sleek arch, about a thousand feet long, with a kink at its midpoint, encouraging pedestrians to pause on their way across. Balmond recently wrote that he had a sudden idea about "two curves that would slip past each other." The kink was originally conceived as an aesthetic element, but Balmond realized that it would have engineering benefits as well. The kink gives the bridge the stability of a much larger structure—in the same way that if you stand with one foot directly in front of the other, tightrope style, you are much less stable than if you move either foot a few inches to the side. The two halves of the Coimbra bridge lean against each other and, in effect, help hold each other up. If you could somehow saw through the bridge at its midpoint, through the center of the kink, the two halves would fall into the river in opposite directions.

One of Ove Arup's favorite projects was, likewise, a footbridge, a modest span across the River Wear on the campus of Durham University, completed in 1963; he later described it as a "rather perfect" example of "the complete integration of architecture, structure and method of construction." Engineers tend to love bridges: they are essentially all structure, the routing of gravity through them isn't concealed behind a façade, and people experience them directly and in their entirety. The Coimbra bridge was built on a budget of less than five million dollars, but it occupies at least as much space in Balmond's mind as the CCTV tower. I visited the bridge with him last fall, shortly before it was completed. He spent a couple of hours admiring it from both riverbanks, and we hitched a ride on a sailboat so that he could look at it from underneath. He brooded about some mud that was visible just above the waterline on both piers—a remnant of construction. António Adão da Fonseca, a Portuguese structural engineer who was Balmond's collaborator on the project, laughed and said, "Cecil, do not worry about this dirt." Balmond said, "Let's face it, I'm paranoid about the damn thing. I'll be polishing the glass panels in the handrails before we open, I assure you."

As the architect of the Coimbra bridge, Balmond has enjoyed seeing his name above the title, but he has also been subjected to one of the principal perils of authorship: criticism. The bridge's reviews haven't been unanimously enthusiastic; Nicolai Ouroussoff, in the *Times*, described the pastel-tinted handrail panels, which Balmond loves, as "slightly overwrought." Architects also have to endure dispiriting battles with clients. Balmond had very specific ideas about how he wanted his bridge to be illuminated at night (discretely, so that the glass panels would twinkle like jewels), while the developer's instinct was for something garish. Similarly, the CCTV tower's steel-and-concrete skeleton is being erected exactly as Arup designed it, while OMA's concept for the building's interior has encountered severe resistance from the Chinese, whose taste runs toward bright lights, polished marble, and chandeliers.

Over lunch in Beijing, I asked Balmond if there weren't advantages to working in the shadows. "It's true," he said. "The more anonymous you can be, the more freedom you have. Rem made a revealing comment to me once. He said, 'It's great that you can deal with universals, instead of architecture that's caught in stylistic bubbles.' And he's right. Rem has tried in his own way to break these bubbles, but in architecture you get trapped." Terry Hill, Arup's chairman, told me that he thinks of engineering as more than a profession: "It's a way of thinking about the world." Ove's concept of the "model fraternity" is really an engineering scheme—a way of routing gravity through a professional organization, and through a life. The Arup coöperative model is less a business plan than a human structural paradigm; it's a reciprocal network, in which the load paths are mutually supporting, and it's the true basis of Ove's "small-scale experiment in how to live and work happily together." Because of the nature of their work, Balmond and his Arup colleagues have been able to achieve something professionally that no single architect, however distinguished, could ever come close to: they have helped design a significant sampling of the greatest buildings of their time.



"Once more, with fury."

• •

Collaboration doesn't always promote harmony. Balmond has a tendency, when discussing group design decisions or projects on which he played a mainly supervisory role, to slip into the first-person singular, and he is not displeased by the personal attention that he has received in the past few years. Koolhaas told me that one reason the two men get along so well is that Balmond's professional ambitions are on a scale with his own, which are huge.

Nevertheless, Balmond remains, as Kapoor described him to me, "very generous with his imagination." In Coimbra that day, he took time out from admiring his bridge to spend an hour with a young Lisbon architect and his girlfriend, an actress, who had somehow managed to track him down. The two of them were working on a stage set for a small dramatic production, and they hoped that Balmond could give them some advice. He listened patiently, and asked many questions.

"You should think about aperiodic tiling," he suggested at one point, referring to a favorite A.G.U. concept, involving non-repeating patterns, and he borrowed my notebook to make a few sketches. "The abstract has no emotional content," he added. "The abstract is more powerful the more abstract it is."

During this conversation, the girlfriend did most of the talking, and I wondered whether the project might not have more to do with her than with her boyfriend. I decided, though, that the architect had been silent mainly because he was too awed to speak. Later, we all walked over to the bridge, whose glass panels follow a three-dimensional aperiodic-tiling scheme devised by the A.G.U., and, when Balmond went ahead to look at something, the young architect told me, "I carry Cecil's book in my pocket every day. When I have a hard or boring day at work, I get on the Metro and open the pages, and I can breathe again. It's like oxygen."

Up on the bridge, Balmond was now leaning against one of the railings. He pointed to an iridescent smudge on the water, a rainbowlike effect created by the afternoon sun shining through the handrail panels. "Look at that!" he said, as happily as if he had designed the river, too. ♦

FICTION

HOMEWORK

BY HELEN SIMPSON

"I can't do it," George groaned, and brought his forehead to rest on the block of lined paper in front of him.

"Can't do what?" I asked, looking up from peeling the carrots for the evening meal. I work from home, so I'm around when George gets in from school. He sits at the kitchen table, and I bring him some milk in his Manchester United mug and a plate with a teatime snack. This might be a slice of toast and honey with a peeled satsuma from which I have removed any stray threads of pith, or perhaps an apple, cored and cut into fine slices, with a few cubes of Cheddar.

Quite often I'm not able to stop what I'm doing, and then I have to stay put. I call out from my desk to say hello when I hear the front door. He calls hello back and makes his way to the television. I'd rather catch up on work in the evening, but I don't always have a choice.

"Can't do what?" I repeated. "I'm sure you can."

"You don't *know*. Everybody says it's really hard. And now I've got to give it in for tomorrow."

"Why do you do this? Why do you leave it to the last minute?"

That's another wonderful thing about George—you can tell him off and he won't immediately go into orbit like some I could mention. He's not a great one for flying off the handle.

"It's just so hard," he moaned.

"Now, come on," I said, drying my hands and patting his nice strong shoulder. "Sit up and tell me what it is. You never know, I might be able to help."

"It's Mr. Mottram," he said, heaving himself up from his slump. "It's English, so it should be all right, but he still wants to make it hard. We've got to do three sides of paper out of our own heads."

George is already taller than me and can lift me off the ground. One or two of his friends have had their growth spurts, so that I find myself deferring to the sudden height and booming voice of a boy whom last year I knew as a clear-skinned little pipsqueak.

"What is it, this terrible task he's set you?"

" 'Write About an Event That Changed Your Life,' " George said with mournful sarcasm. "*That's* what it is."

"Three pages is a lot." Then a thought occurred to me. "You've had all the Easter holidays to do this, haven't you? And you just didn't let on about it. Now it's your first week back and the chickens have come home to roost."

"I know," he said, spreading his hands palms upward in front of him. "There's no excuse."

"What have your friends done?"

"Dylan's written about when he went to a football match with his uncle, Crystal Palace versus Queens Park Rangers, and realized Crystal Palace was the team he wanted to follow for the rest of his life."

"I can't see how he filled three sides of paper with that."

"He said it only took up one page even in big writing," George said. "Now he's got to, you know, pad it out. He's going to describe all the Crystal Palace matches he's been to since then, one at a time."

Serves Mr. Mottram right, I thought; I don't know what he can be expecting from a class of thirteen-year-olds. They can't know what a life-changing event is at their age. How can they know if what happened to them last year will have changed them in twenty years' time? They won't know till they get there.

"I shouldn't really help you," I said. "I should leave you to get on with it. But if I do . . ."

"Yes?" George said, propped up on his elbows, eying me with wary optimism.

"*If* I help you, you've got to understand it's only this once."

"Course," he said with a beaming smile of relief. "You know I'm not like that, Mum."

"Yes." I smiled back. "I do know. I trust you."

" 'Cause you can," he said, shrugging. "All right then, let's think."

I sat down at the kitchen table and watched him assume a thoughtful expression. He furrowed his brow and chewed at the end of his Biro, then caught my eye and started to giggle.

"I'd rather write about anything else in the world," he complained.

"Just think," I said. "In fifty years' time you might really want to write about the Event That Changed Your Life. In your old age you might find you're desperate to set down your memories. Look at Grandma."

My mother had recently filled half a red Silvine exercise book with startlingly deadpan revelations. Her father had, at the age of fourteen, rejected a future as a farm laborer and walked down from Wakefield to London to find work; at first he slept wrapped in old newspaper on benches along the Embankment. That was before he went to fight in France. *His* father had been, among other things, a prizefighter at country fairs, more or less on the wrong side of the law all his life.

"No," George said, shaking his head firmly. "*Boring*."

"You might find it interesting when you get older," I persisted. "I never knew that her mother, your great-grandmother, was found as a newborn baby wrapped in a flour sack on the church steps early one Sunday morning. That accounts for a lot."

I'm glad I wasn't born at a time when you had to stay with the father of your children even if he broke your jaw.

"Where was *I* born?" asked George, who knew perfectly well.

"Willesden General," I said. "Then I kept you beside me in a basket all the time for months and months. You were a lovely mild baby, like a dewdrop."

George smiled a gratified smile. "But I did cry sometimes," he prompted.

"Yes, but when you cried it just made me laugh," I said. "You didn't wail in a high-pitched way; no, it was more like the roar of a lion, and then only when you wanted milk. When you were hungry, you just roared!"

He smirked at this and gave an illustrative growl.

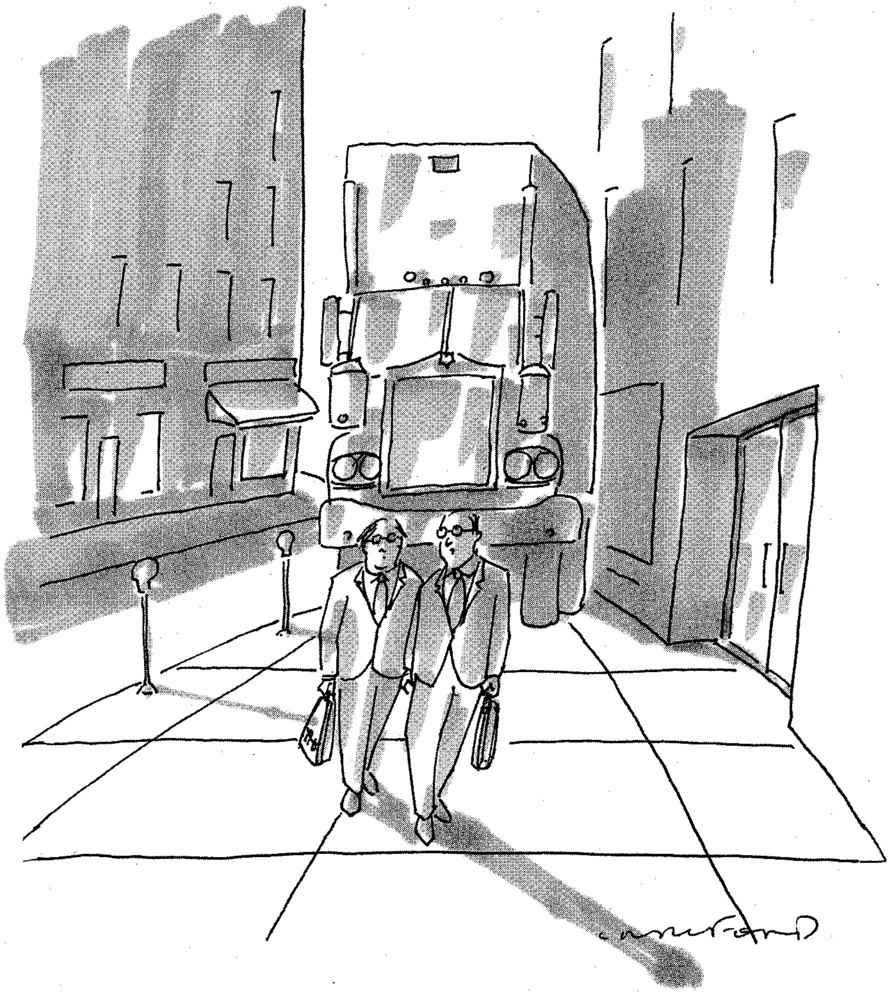
Following his birth, I'd had an urge to find out more about my family tree. After a while I gave up. It had branches and twigs and leaves in every corner of the British Isles. There were shipwrights and ropemakers in Northumberland, laborers in Lincolnshire, watchmen and peddlers and blacksmiths from Ipswich and Barnstaple and Carlisle. The further back I went, the further afield they spread out. It seemed pointless. George was from all over the place.

"Life-changing events," I said, returning to the business in hand. "Let's think of some examples."

"If you win the lottery," George suggested.

"Or lose all your money," I said. "Go bankrupt like Dad's dad. Skip the country like my uncle Colin."

NANCY HONEY, "CITY BUS NUMBER 14" (1993)



"It was probably a mistake to have cut him off on the Major Deegan."

• •

"Yes," George said, pen poised, looking less hopeful.

"What would change the life of a thirteen-year-old, though? That's the question," I reminded myself. "The death of a parent, certainly, but I don't want you writing about that because it might bring bad luck."

"Jacob's mother died," George commented. "He doesn't want to talk about it."

"No," I said. "Poor Jacob. What did she die of?"

"He says cancer. But Ranjit told me it wasn't that, it was a bottle of tablets." George shrugged. "I don't know."

"No," I said again. Jacob would get by till middle age, probably, when he would step onto this death as onto the tines of a garden fork, and the solid shaft of the handle would rear up and hit him in the face.

"So, not death," I said. "Because that's the obvious one. No, it'll have to be your parents' divorce."

"But you're not divorced."

"Well, we are in this story."

"He'll think it's really true," George said, looking worried.

"So?" I said. "It'll fill three sides of paper. Let's have the mum leaving the dad for a change, rather than the other way around. And you have to move from your family house to a flat, and your new bedroom is tiny and you have to share it with your little brother, who drives you mad."

"I haven't got a little brother."

"Mr. Mottram doesn't know that."

My siblings are scattered far and wide. Sharon runs a bed-and-breakfast up by Hadrian's Wall. Valerie has an alpha-male job in the City, just like her husband, and they live in a big house in Wimbledon. Keith has had various irons in the fire over the years, but now he's teaching English as a foreign language in China. Very modern Britain, our family.

George looked at me warily. I could see that he was torn between his natural fantasy-hating honesty and a desire to have someone else do his homework.

"Is it allowed?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "It's English, isn't it? Don't they call this bit creative writing? Well, you're just being creative."

"Ha," George said.

"Inventive," I added. "It's a *good* thing. Listen, you want to watch the match tonight, don't you? Chelsea versus Liverpool, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"In which case you'd better get this homework finished before dinner. Which I'm doing specially for seven o'clock, because I know you like all that warmup chat beforehand."

"Thanks, Mum."

I couldn't resist giving him a hug, the roaring dewdrop baby who had grown into this broad-shouldered boy. Last week I'd been making flapjacks while he stood by to lick the spoon, and I mentioned that I'd always liked the picture of the lion on the Golden Syrup tin. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness," he read aloud, peering at the green-and-gold picture. "That's what's written underneath it." I never knew that before.

"Have you got your pen ready? I'm not going to write this for you, you know; I'm only going to give you ideas."

"O.K.," he agreed. He was in no position to object.

"Your parents had been having arguments for years. You remember the slammed doors and bitter words from when you were little," I began.

George started to write.

"You tried to blot it out, but you couldn't help feeling upset inside. It got into your dreams. You could put a bad dream in, George; that would take up a few lines."

"What about?"

"Oh, an earthquake perhaps," I said. "I was always dreaming about earthquakes and floods and fires when I was your age. Or you're in a house and it falls down around you and you try to run, but the ground opens up in front of you."

"To pad it out a bit?" George said.

"If you like. Then there's the divorce, which is a relief after all the fighting."

"Why did Auntie Sharon get divorced?"

"I don't know," I said, tutting. "They seemed quite happy to start with, but then Mike turned into a bear with a sore head when she had the twins. Some people find domestic life more of a trial than others."

"Dad loves domestic," George commented. "On Fridays when he gets back home, he says, 'Ah, domestic bliss.' "

"Yes, well," I said with a stunted smile.

"Auntie Sharon lives in the nicest place, and she's got three dogs, but Auntie Valerie's got the best job," George said. "Her family goes on the best holidays, and they've got an Audi and a BMW. I want a BMW when I get a job. That's the first thing I'll buy."

"Oh, really." I sniffed. "The only time they all manage to get together as a family is when they go on some expensive safari thousands of miles away."

"Just because they've got good jobs," George said, "you shouldn't be jealous."

"I'm not jealous!" I declared. "How could I be jealous of anyone working those ridiculous hours? They've sold their souls."

"Oh, Mum," George said reprovingly.

"Anyway, after the divorce you have to move house and change schools."

"Why?"

"Because you do. Money. Jobs. And you go and live with your father and your little brother, and you visit your mother at weekends. You might even ask if you can go and live with your grandma for a while."

"Why?" George said again, large-eyed, even more down in the mouth.

"For a break," I said absently.

Grow up in certain homes and it's like being out on a cold, choppy sea in an open dinghy with two angry fishermen in charge. Or sometimes just a single fisherman, who is, what's more, drunk. Whereas with a grandparent life for a child can be less dangerous, more like being afloat on a reservoir.

"What happens next?"

"The mum wants a new start. She wants to see the world! Everybody else has."

"But, Mum, Mr. Mottram will think it's really you."

"When you think about it," I mused, "it's none of Mr. Mottram's business. He should only be interested in it as a piece of writing. Is it a good piece of writing? Is it convincing?"

"What if he asks me?" George muttered.

"He won't. He's an English teacher, isn't he, not a psychotherapist. So if he did ask you he'd just be being nosy."

George shrugged helplessly.

When I went to live with my grandmother for a while, she had enough to eat but not quite enough to keep warm. She was over seventy, but she had kept on one of her old cleaning jobs—Mrs. Blincoe—mainly for the sake of being in a house with central heating. I'd go along to help with the floors; then, while she polished and dusted, I'd puzzle over the Latin homework that held my enfranchisement. She never considered this work demeaning, and in fact looked down on Mrs. Blincoe as an unfeminine woman, a cold woman who had made her husband lonely and who did not grieve when he died but said, "Now I'm free to do what I want to do," and went off round the world on various package holidays. The cheerful bearded sailor on her packet of Players was as close as my grandmother ever got to the sea. She cooked with a cigarette in her mouth; quite often ash would fall into the gravy, and she would stir it in as extra seasoning.

"Listen, you're doing 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' aren't you?" I continued. "Do you think Shakespeare got asked whether he'd ever grown donkey's ears?"

George smiled briefly.

"Right. So you see your mum at weekends, and one weekend she tells you she wants to go to Peru and asks if she can borrow your Duke of Edinburgh rucksack. She promises she'll send you postcards. It's just something she's got to do to move forward in her life."

George scribbled away, not happy with where the story line was going but incapable of coming up with an alternative. I felt powerful, like a magician pulling rabbits out of a hat.

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"I still don't think it's allowed," he said.

"Of course it's allowed," I said. "You've got to have things happening, see, or it's not a story. Think of the films you like. Car chases. Explosions. Sharks."

"Can the mum be swimming in the China Sea and then a shark comes up?" George asked hopefully, trying to enter into the creative spirit.

"Probably not," I said dryly. "That might be a step too far for Mr. Mottram, don't you think?"

"But you said—"

"Yes, but we've got to make it believable. It's like a game, isn't it? He shouldn't be able to tell what's real and what's made up."

"I'd like to go to Japan," George said. "They've got the new Nintendo Wii there, and I could get it way ahead of everybody else. Plus, you don't have to have injections to go there."

"Next," I said. "I think the dad meets someone else, don't you? At first he's just been going to work and coming back and cooking nasty teas. You've had to help—buying a loaf of bread on the way home from school, that sort of thing, and doing the washing up without being asked."

"Isn't there a dishwasher in the new place?"

"It's broken. And nobody gets round to finding someone to mend it, and, anyway, you're all out all day. Maybe your little brother can be in because he's ill, though. Chicken pox."

"My little brother can't be left on his own," George objected. "If he's seven or eight or something. That's against the law."

"O.K., you've got an older sister instead."

"*She* can cook," he said with satisfaction. The meals were worrying him.

"No, she can't," I said. "She just eats crisps and bananas. No, it's the dad that has to do it after work, unless you start teaching yourself from a cookbook."

George looked up from his pad suspiciously. I was always trying to get him interested in cutting up broccoli florets or making omelettes.

"The dad should do it," he protested. "I'm a kid, it's not my job. Kids should be looked after by their parents."

"You're thirteen, George!" I said. I was about to bring up the walk from Wakefield, but then I stopped myself. "Oh well, it's your story. The dad does the cooking, but it's always pasta."

"Cool," George said, grinning.

"And the pasta is always soggy." I scowled. "Feel free to carry on."

"No, no," he said. "After you."

"He's been trying to cook, but he's no good at it. Then he meets, let's see, Miranda. You know she's not nasty or anything, but she's got nothing to do with you. And he starts including her in on everything."

"How?"

"She's always there when he's around, watching television with you, in between you on the sofa."

"What, even when football's on?"

"Yes. She pretends to like it. She says she's a Chelsea supporter."

"Chelsea," George said grimly.

"One weekend your mum tells you she's off backpacking in three days' time, first stop Thailand," I continued. "We need to wind this up, George. She promises she'll send postcards. You could have them arriving a bit later on with little messages—you know, ate fried tortoise, went bungee jumping, that sort of thing. You could stick them on the fridge so Miranda can see them."

"Maybe she can cook."

"Not likely," I said. "She's not interested in food. She doesn't see why she should, anyway. Why *should* she? Then it's the last straw. You've just had another of these postcards; the mum's got as far as Australia. And your dad announces that your holiday this year is camping in Wales—there's no money for anything else. He can stretch to walking boots for you and your sister, but that's it."

"Wales," George said, with leaden emphasis.

"I think you can leave it somewhere there," I said airily. "It's April now—people are planning their summer holidays. Mr. Mottram will buy that."

"But how do I finish it off?"

"You don't have to really; you don't have to solve everything. It's not a police procedural. But you're right, you do need something."

"Yes."

"I know," I said. "Pull in your love of football. All these months since the divorce you've turned to football to help you forget. This year you've been following the Champions' League with a passion. Is your team doing all right in it? Manchester United?"

"Last night's game was *amazing*, Mum," George said earnestly. "Rooney scored this goal in the ninety-first minute, and I couldn't believe it." He shook his head in wonder. "It was unbelievable."

"Was he happy?"

"He did this full-body dive all the way along the grass, then he lay with his head on his arms, and they all bundled in on top of him. We were playing at home, though—it might not be so good in the away match."

"You can put all that in, just like you've told it to me." I'd been struck by a thought. "Now, what does the Man U crowd chant when it wants the team to win? You know, like Tottenham's is 'Come on, you Spu-urs.' "

"UNITED! UNITED!" George chanted automatically.

"There you are," I said. "That's your last paragraph. You explain how football has got you through your parents' divorce. You describe Rooney's great goal in the ninety-first minute. How your team means so much to you. Then you write how you joined in with the TV crowd shouting, "UNITED! UNITED!" And you round it off with the words 'Ironic, really.' "

"Ha," said George, who wasn't slow on the uptake, even if the pilot light of his imagination had yet to flare into action. He smiled reluctantly and started to write this down.

I looked at his fair head bent over the writing pad. The time for advice was almost gone. Beware heat without warmth. When a man loses his temper, people say, That's the Irish in him, or the Scottish, or the Viking. Don't listen to them. Dirty players or terriers are what they call footballers with that anger-stoked edge, but strength without sweetness is no use at all.

"Ironic because?" I asked.

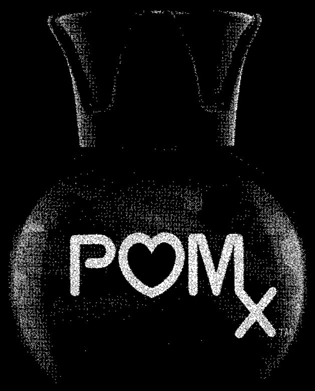
"The mum and the dad. They're *not* united."

"There you are."

I glanced at the kitchen clock.

"I've got to get on," I said. "I've got my own work to do."

"That's all right," he said, smiling up at me. "You go. I can do it now." ♦



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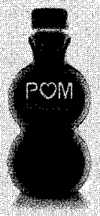

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THE CRITICS

PHILIP BURKE

BOOKS

THE NAKED AND THE DEAD

The very public life of Princess Diana.

BY JOHN LANCHESTER

At the time of her death, on August 31, 1997, Princess Diana had come to have no privacy whatsoever. Take this recording of a private phone conversation with James Gilbey. The lovers' chat featured the following exchange:

> GILBEY: I haven't played with myself . . . for a full forty-eight hours. (*musingly*) Not for a full forty-eight hours. . . .
>
> DIANA (*sounding vague*): I watched "East Enders" today.

The tape in question seems to have been rebroadcast on a cellular frequency, where amateur scanners could encounter it, and several copies were handed to the newspapers. It has been argued that the recording must have been made by members of the British security services, as part of a P.R. battle shaping up between Diana and her husband, Prince Charles. Its release may even have been occasioned by the fact that Charles, too, had had an embarrassing recording made of him—the famous conversation with his mistress Camilla Parker Bowles, in which he spoke of his wish to be reincarnated as a tampon. And all this was in the early nineties, when the "war of the Waleses," as it came to be called, was just heating up.

That P.R. battle and the lack of privacy were partly Diana's fault; much of what is in the public domain was put there by her. Before her death, she invaded her own privacy with a book ("Diana: Her True Story," written by Andrew Morton with her coöperation) and a television interview (the "Panorama" conversation with Martin Bashir, in which she uttered the line about wanting to be "the Queen of people's hearts"). The revelations—about the Windsors' coldness, Charles's love for Camilla Parker Bowles, and Diana's bulimia—were explosive for the Royal Family, and disastrous for Diana, too, since they did nothing to discourage the hacks on the royal beat, who range from the merely avid through the unscrupulous to the outright criminal. (A former royal editor of the *News of the World,* Rupert Murdoch's Sunday tabloid, was jailed this year for conspiring to hack into telephone messages.)

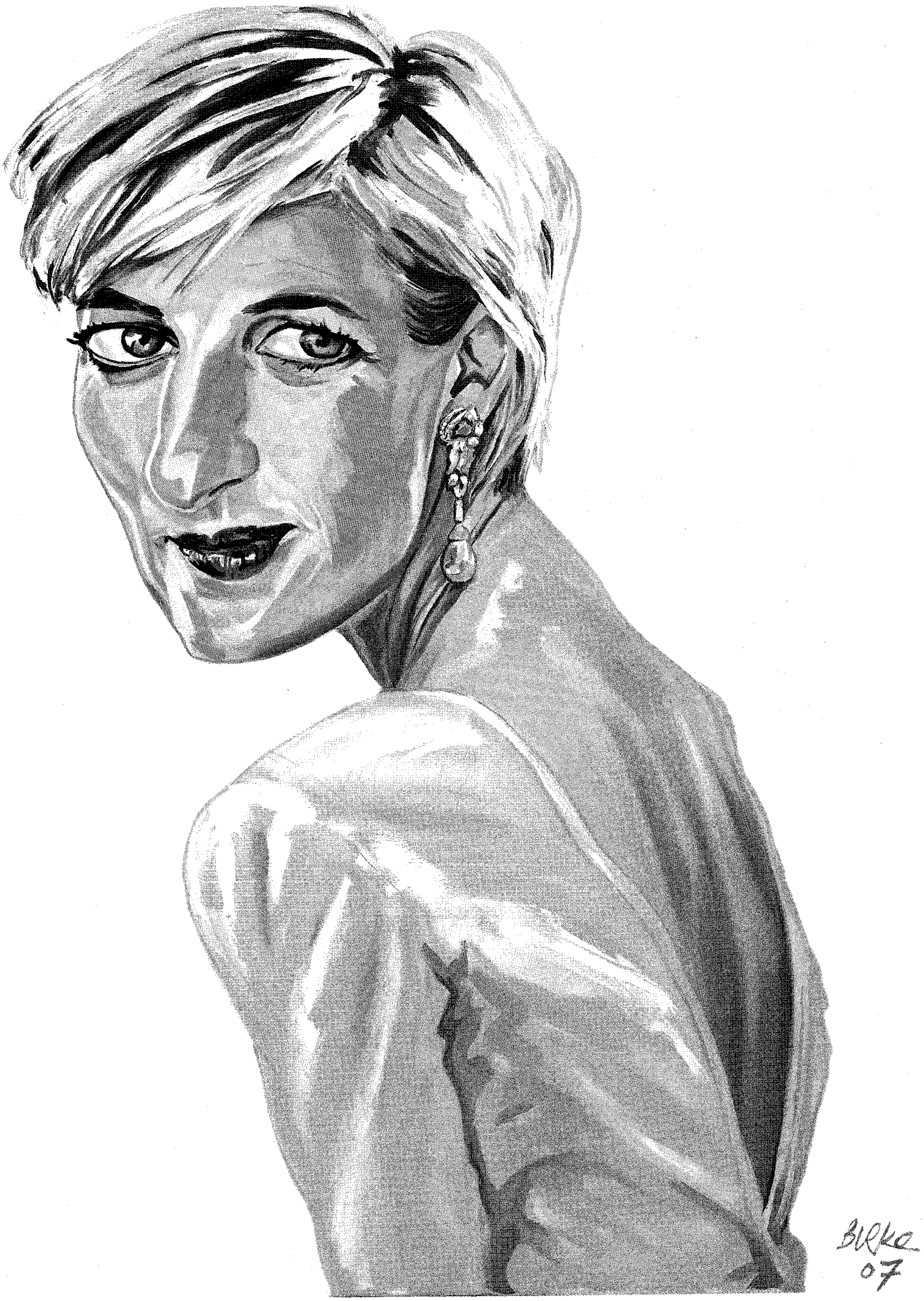
By now, there have been dozens of books, by everyone from her butler and her housekeeper to her private secretary, as well as the release of tapes she made when talking about intimate matters with her speech coach, and tapes she made when she was helping Morton with his book (help she later vehemently denied having given). Ten years after her death, it seems, we know everything about Diana.

With other modern icons who died young—Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, J.F.K.—the posthumous accumulation of data has led to a broader and more complex sense of who they were. Not so with Diana. Although we now have Total Information Awareness about her, the gist of what we know hasn't changed since she first went public with her story. Both the Morton book and the Bashir interview allowed a full view of Diana's faults—a much fuller one than she realized. Diana was clearly a mythomaniac, a fantasist, a fibber, a manipulator, and a world-class actress, with a particular talent for delivering well-rehearsed, weapons-grade zingers with an air of absolute innocence. ("There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded.") But the nub of what she said had the feeling of truth, and has it still: Diana married too young, her husband never loved her, and the Royal Family gave her no support. We now know all sorts of details: that, by the second day of the honeymoon, Charles was calling Camilla, and wrote her a tormented three-page letter; that, later on the honeymoon, Diana found him wearing cufflinks that Camilla had given him; that, soon into their marriage, Diana caught Charles telling Camilla over the phone, "Whatever happens, I will always love you." Yet the basic portrait has not changed.

It's hard to imagine any revelation that would alter the shape of this sad narrative, which has been told overexcitedly (by, for one, Paul Burrell, Diana's butler, in "The Way We Were"—emetic book, emetic title) and soberly (by Sarah Bradford, in her serious and balanced 2006 biography, "Diana"). But the best book on Diana is the newest, "The Diana Chronicles" (Doubleday; $27.50), by Tina Brown. She is well qualified to tell this story, since it was Brown who wrote the *Vanity Fair* piece that first exposed the trouble in the Waleses' marriage, back in 1985. It was called "The Mouse That Roared" and caused a furor in the British press, in the course of painting a picture that is still vivid: Diana, she wrote, "spends hours cut off in her Sony Walkman, dancing on her own to Dire Straits and Wham!" while her husband turned to various gurus and mediums, one of whom had encouraged him to contact his "Uncle Dickie"—Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was murdered in 1979—on a Ouija board. The British tabloids whipped up a storm of denunciation against Brown's piece—"a rat bag of gossip," according to the *Daily Mirror*—which, of course, allowed them to report, extensively, every detail of it.

Brown was the editor of *Tatler,* "the

Diana was a world-class actress, delivering well-rehearsed, weapons-grade zingers with an air of absolute innocence.


Birke
07

house magazine for the upper classes," as she calls it, from 1979 to 1983, when Diana burst onto the scene and married Charles; she was the editor of *Vanity Fair* from 1984 to 1992, when Diana was busy becoming the most famous woman in the world; she was the editor of this magazine at the time of Diana's death. The world of the British upper classes is very different from the world of international celebrity, but Brown knows both milieus well. She spent time with Diana and has met Charles, and her book is, among other things, a miracle of access (from the first page: "It was gracious of Prime Minister Tony Blair to see me and share his reflections on Diana"). She tells the story fluently, with engrossing detail on every page, and with the mastery of tone which made her *Tatler* famous for being popular with the people it was laughing at.

HAWTHORNE ON HIS WAY HOME

Walking through the village
of Danvers, late one afternoon
in the fall of 1836, Nathaniel Hawthorne
saw an old man carrying

two dry, rustling bundles
of cornstalks, and he thought:
A good personification of Autumn.
Another man was hoeing up potatoes.

What did he represent? It was October.
The wild rosebushes were bare.
In the fields—brittle Indian corn,
pale rows of cabbages.

"A landscape now wholly autumnal,"
Hawthorne wrote in his journal, and perhaps
he noticed the way *now* means *then*
as soon as it's written down,

the way remembering conceals invention,
or tries to. Idea for a tale:
a man, composing a story, finds
it shaping itself against his intentions.

The characters act otherwise
than he planned. Unforeseen events occur.
Hawthorne paused. Above the village,
clouds were being carried off by the wind.

In a story, he thought, what a man observes
might shadow forth his fate:
wild roses, barberry, Indian corn.
The down of thistles flying through the air.

—*Lawrence Raab*

The story is, not surprisingly, all about class, which is to say, tribe and caste. When Diana Spencer first appeared in public, she looked like a pretty but essentially generic Sloane Ranger, a member of the affluent upper-middle classes whose mores were a favorite journalistic staple in Britain during the early nineteen-eighties. This view was accurate as far as it went—no one came off as more of a Sloane than Diana—but it didn't go nearly far enough, since the point about Diana was that she was authentically upper-class, a member of a family who had been aristocrats far longer than the family that currently occupies the throne. Indeed, the Spencers had helped smooth the ascension to the throne of George I, in 1714, founding the Hanoverian dynasty whose descendants are the current royals. (In private, the staff of Murdoch's tabloid the *Sun* refer to the Royal Family as "the Germans"; taking photographs of them is called "whacking the Germans.") Brown stresses that the Spencers "were servants of the monarchy *they chose*."

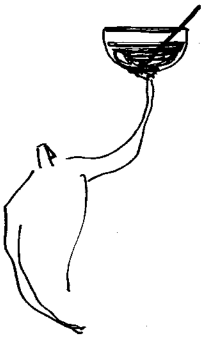
This aspect of the Spencers, and the family's overwhelming sense of pride, didn't become central to the public perception of them until Diana's funeral, when her younger brother, Charles, who by then had inherited the title of Earl Spencer and the family estate of Althorp, made a speech that was filled with implicit rebuke. He observed that Diana "needed no royal title to continue to generate her particular brand of magic"—an acid riposte to a family who had stripped her of her royal status by refusing her the right to call herself Her Royal Highness. The most forceful thing about the speech was its subtext: who do these Windsors think they are?

Two areas where the question of class manifested itself were to be highly problematic for Diana. The first was her outlandish lack of education. These days, the upper classes educate their daughters assiduously, not out of any sense of the inherent value of education but because they know that these young women will be stranded in later life without it. But Diana was born in 1961, before that change had fully caught on, and she left her prep school, Riddlesworth Hall, with an award for the best-kept guinea pig and the Leggat prize for helpfulness, to go to an undemanding private school called West Heath (its only entry requirement was "neat handwriting"). She graduated with no O levels, having failed the exams, twice. O levels were the exams that British children took at sixteen, and for someone in a private school to fail all of them twice is, in its way, a remarkable achievement, rarer and more difficult than passing one or two, or, indeed, than getting twelve A's. To fail on that scale was either to be astoundingly stupid—which Diana clearly wasn't—or to have some other plan.

Diana did have a plan: she knew from early on that she wanted to marry Prince Charles. She grew up on the Queen's private estate at Sandringham, in Norfolk, where her family let a house, and she was, after all, a Spencer, so this wasn't such an odd or implausible ambition, though it did have a component of fantasy. As her step-grandmother Barbara Cartland (her daughter married Diana's father) said, with devastating trenchancy, "The only books she ever read were mine, and they weren't awfully good for her." The absence of intellectual resources was to be a real problem for Diana later, all the more so because she did not acknowledge it; she had other ways of filling her time and making her own entertainment, many of them damaging. Katharine Graham, who met her in 1994, asked her whether, now that she was alone, she'd had any thoughts of going to college. "She found my question hard to believe," Graham recalled, "and commented with irony, 'I've already had an education.' " In retrospect, it's clear, Diana would have been better off with a mug of cocoa and an art-history book than with jetting around Europe with Dodi Al Fayed.

But education—this seems to have been her youthful calculation—might have put a royal suitor off. So would having what was known as a "past"; i.e., ever having had sex. Diana referred to her virginity as keeping herself "tidy," and she seems to have been much more aware than anyone else that this was an indispensable qualification for a future royal bride. Many potential rivals disqualified themselves by having boyfriends, but she hung in to be the last woman standing. This may have had unfortunate consequences. Her inexperience, the Waleses' sexual incompatibility, and Charles's feelings for Camilla were a combination that no marriage could have survived.

Class was, again, a big part of this. Men of the British upper class seem to regard sexual fidelity as being somehow middle-class. They certainly don't go in for it much, not once the wife has produced, in the classic formula, "an heir and a spare." Before his marriage, Charles had an extensive sex life with married women. The husbands seem—creepily, to the middle-class reader—not to have minded. "The reflected honor of royalty's trust outweighed such déclassé emotions as jealousy, humiliation, and a sense of proprietorship," Brown writes. This may be hard to credit, but Brown addresses the subject with a level of detail that is likely to lead to a temporary pause in the flow of invitations to St. James's Palace. Charles, who, according to one lover, "likes to be called Arthur when he climaxes," told a friend that his wedding night with Diana was "nothing special" and used to have sex with her only once every three weeks—oh, and the reason he gets on so well with Camilla in bed is that she told him to treat her like "a rocking horse." Diana said that the sexual problems were "geographical," which is cryptic, and, as Brown points out, "in fairness to Charles, her throwing up all the time didn't help sexual relations." Once again, the most blistering insight comes from Barbara Cartland: "Of course, you know where it all went wrong. She wouldn't do oral sex."



Everyone misread Diana's lack of education and lack of sexual experience as signs of a quiet, dim, low-key posh girl. In fact, they were indicators of her strength of will. She was an extraordinarily quick learner, and her complicated childhood—her mother walked out on her father, and then lost custody of her children when her own mother testified against her—left Diana with an ability to see and to empathize with pain. When she felt shy on social and public occasions (which, at the start, was always), she made a beeline for the most ill-at-ease person in the room, and tried to make him or her feel comfortable, which made her feel more comfortable, too. The Windsors are stiff and awkward, and are quick to pull rank. Diana was none of these things, and many other royals resented her popularity with the public and her ability to outshine her husband. Her as-

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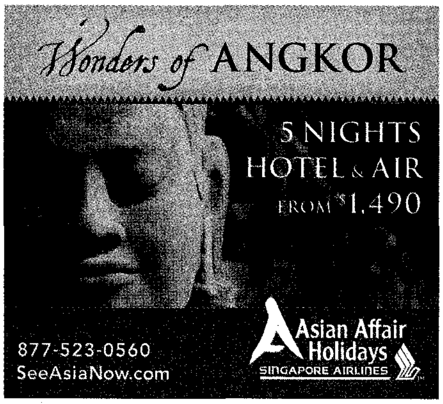
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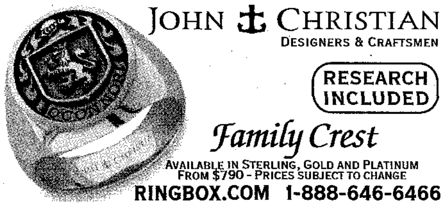
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tuteness was apparent in her charity work. Diana may have described her charities (to Martin Bashir) as involving "battered this, battered that," but her choice of good causes was brilliant: she visited an AIDS ward and shook hands with a patient at a time, 1987, when the stigma of the illness was so great that only one of the people she was visiting would have his photograph taken—and he did so with his back to the camera. That visit had a big impact, as did her work on the previously underpublicized cause of banning land mines. There was a marked contrast with the Windsors, who plug away at their favorite causes in a manner that sometimes implies that attracting too much attention to them would be vulgar.

And then there was her beauty, which was something she grew into as her marriage became more difficult. Her fashion sense and knowledge of how to look in front of a camera developed, and so did her instinctive sense of how publicity worked. As Brown observes, "Diana would have always been a beautiful, warm, and empathetic woman, but her tribulations gave her the incentive to become extraordinary. Pain made her luminous. And what made her so riveting to the British people is the way they saw this transformation happening before their eyes."

The consequences of all this were tragic. As Brown says, "Diana herself had accelerated the climate change that ended up making her life literally impossible." Of all the people who hungrily read every word written about her, Diana was the hungriest. She pored over photos of herself, and loved the publicity that, by the end, had her entirely trapped. One of the many ironies about her death is that part of what attracted her to Dodi Al Fayed was the retinue of security guards and minders with which he moved. She didn't just want to be protected; she needed to be, and she no longer trusted the police details that were hers for the asking. In winning the publicity war with Charles, she created for herself a way of life and a degree of celebrity which became untenable.

Perhaps, had Diana lived, she might have found safety in a rich husband and a Jackie Onassis-type second act; she and Charles might have grown closer, as two such devoted parents were not unlikely to do. Camilla Parker Bowles might have played a role here. Brown, who carefully does not take sides between Charles and Diana, isn't Parker Bowles's biggest fan, and her book could have the unofficial subtitle "What Camilla Wants, Camilla Gets." If Diana had lived, Camilla would have had reason to want a postmarital rapprochement between Charles and Diana, because it would have made her less unpopular. But that isn't what fate had in mind for Diana Frances Spencer.

As for what it has in mind for her former in-laws, the partly Diana-induced change of climate—which has seen the Royal Family become celebrities—may, in time, be their undoing, too. Deference? Stone dead. Courtier's discretion? Even deader, as the amount of detail in all these royal books attests. Is it possible to inhabit Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Balmoral, and Sandringham without being able to rely on the silence of the people who work for you? We're going to find out.

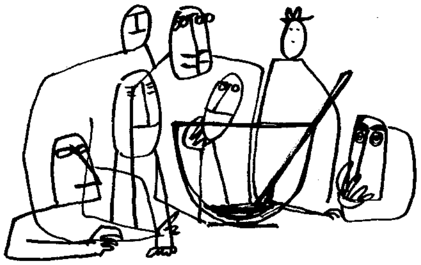
There are two risks, in particular, for the Royal Family. The first is that the British public will grow tired of them, as one does of celebrities, so that the institution becomes unviably unpopular. The royals are sometimes compared to a sitcom and often compared to a soap opera, but they most closely resemble a reality-TV series, one in which we know too much about the contestants but can't vote them off. The other, an even greater risk, is that the younger royals will decide that they simply don't want the job. As Brown observes, "Much of what Royals do for their considerable perks is either desperately dull or supremely depressing. For most people, it would be like thinking of the worst aspects of your job and only doing the bits that bore you the most—sucking up to clients, say, or attending soul-destroying sales dinners—with no prospect, ever, of retirement."

Combine this outlook with the complete absence of any privacy, and that might be a recipe for an unlivable life, one that a new generation might choose not to take up. The Spencers helped ease the Windsors onto the British throne. A time may yet come when their most famous daughter helps nudge them off it. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Varieties of Disturbance, *by Lydia Davis (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $13).* Davis's whimsical, seemingly eventless fictions, with their looping motifs and love of obliquity, fall somewhere between prose poetry and Venn diagrams. In her new collection, Kafka agonizes over the menu for a dinner date ("One man fights at Marathon, the other in the kitchen"), and death is approached as a grammatical problem ("Is he, once he is dead, still 'he'?"). While some stories follow a nominal plot—two academics strolling through Oxford is as wild as it gets—others are not even a sentence long. ("Index Entry" reads, in its entirety, "Christian, I'm not a.") Strung together, they gain momentum as tiny epics of paranoia and ennui, each a snapshot of "a moment of madness during which the people could not bear the frustration of their lives."

The Descendants, *by Kaui Hart Hemmings (Random House; $24.95).* The narrator of this audaciously comic début novel, the scion of the last Hawaiian landowning clan, has floated through his privileged life: marriage to a model given to "speedboats, motorcycles, alcoholism"; children getting into trouble (cocaine, bullying) at élite schools; membership at a century-old beach club that rejects those with "unfavorable pedigrees." But when a catamaran accident leaves his wife in a coma he must wake from his own "prolonged unconsciousness," reacquaint himself with his neglected daughters, and track down his wife's lover. Meanwhile, his cousins are urging him to sell the family's vast landholdings for development—to relinquish, in his eyes, the final vestige of their native Hawaiian ancestry. Hemmings channels the voice of her befuddled middle-aged hero with virtuosity, as he teeters between acerbic and sentimental, scoffing at himself even as he grasps for redemption.



Nature's Engraver, *by Jenny Uglow (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30).* In 1767, when fourteen-year-old Thomas Bewick became an engraver's apprentice in Newcastle, woodcutting was commonly deemed a crude art that could never rival pricey copperplate in detail. But Bewick perfected the craft with realistic yet whimsical engravings that conveyed the vanishing rural world of his youth with a "miniature intensity." Uglow traces his rise: he became the head of a workshop (she is very knowledgeable about the material history of engraving and printing), and achieved sudden fame with the publication of "A General History of Quadrupeds," which was followed by two volumes on British birds. The appeal of these masterworks, Uglow shows, lay as much in their characterful portraits of imposing Newfoundlands, devilish cormorants, and shy wood ducks as in the intimate and affordable medium in which they were presented. She includes a generous selection of Bewick's wood engravings, including many of his tiny "tailpieces," in their original sizes and with their original purpose, to fill space beneath text.

Ace of Spades, *by David Matthews (Henry Holt; $24).* The son of a Zionist white mother and a Malcolm X-admiring black father, Matthews, in this memoir, is a boy without a race in a city, Baltimore, that requires him to choose one. The story of racial pinball is not entirely unfamiliar: the black kids reject him as too light-skinned, the whites as too broad-nosed. But Matthews displays improvisational verve—blacks are "burnished" and "browned butter," and whites are anything from "alabaster" to "a puffy marshmallow in Baltimore's steaming cup of cocoa"—and narrates with the vigor of a movie script. Indeed, it is on television that, as a child, he finds the clarity he yearns for. "I was a living contradiction of elements that shouldn't have been," he writes at one point, whereas on TV "everything was black, or white, and a lot like life."

WOODY ALLEN FIRED HER. SHE FIRED BACK.

Typically, getting fired by director and legend Woody Allen is not such a good thing. Not so for actress **Annabelle Gurwitch**, who poured her sad tale into *Fired!* As seen in theaters and on Showtime, *Fired!* now comes to DVD, loaded with outtakes, additional interviews, and, of course, plenty of sad-turned-funny tales.

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MUSICAL EVENTS

ON THE ROAD

Three orchestras, three cities, two days.

BY ALEX ROSS

On the Internet, the landscape of American orchestral life is visible as never before. Almost all professional orchestras have their own Web sites, where you can study schedules, listen to MP3s, admire pictures of the executive director with donors, and read cute bios of the players. (The oboist bungee-jumps; ergo, musicians are human beings, not alien geeks.) Wandering around this virtual map, you can see signs that America's orchestras are vacillating between vague optimism and raw panic. In some cases, straight-up classical works are perilously rare; concertos of Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky huddle among prepackaged pops programs like "Barbie at the Symphony" (an edutainment event backed by Mattel) and "The Music of Barbra Streisand" (Babs not included). Nearly as often, you stumble on happy surprises. Who would have guessed that the Redwood Symphony, a volunteer orchestra in the Silicon Valley area, has played all of Mahler's symphonies? That the South Dakota Symphony has featured eight Pulitzer Prize-winning works this season? Or that the Rochester Philharmonic just recorded, on the Harmonia Mundi label, one of the snappiest Gershwin disks in years?

To hear the grand old ensembles of Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Cleveland, a New York critic need only ride the subway to Carnegie Hall. Last month, I decided to check in on a few orchestras that can't afford to tour in grand style around the country. After picking up a rental car at the Indianapolis airport, I drove down Interstate 65, seeing as many performances in a stretch as I could. Thanks to generous speed limits, I was able to catch a Thursday matinée by the Indianapolis Symphony; a performance that night by the Nashville Symphony; and, the following day, a concert by the Alabama Symphony, in Birmingham. I learned what touring musicians have been saying for years: that lesser-known orchestras can deliver sure-footed, commanding performances, and that the notion of a stratospheric orchestral élite is something of an illusion.

The Indianapolis Symphony is the oldest and richest of the three groups I visited. Founded in 1930, it now has a budget of more than twenty-seven million dollars. In recent years, it has benefitted from a downtown revitalization effort that has actually worked; its concert venue is a renovated movie palace in the shadow of the State Soldiers and Sailors Monument, in the heart of the city. Like many orchestras, the Indianapolis is reporting a decline in subscriptions but a compensating rise in single-ticket sales—a sign that the audience of the future may not want to pay for clusters of concerts in advance.

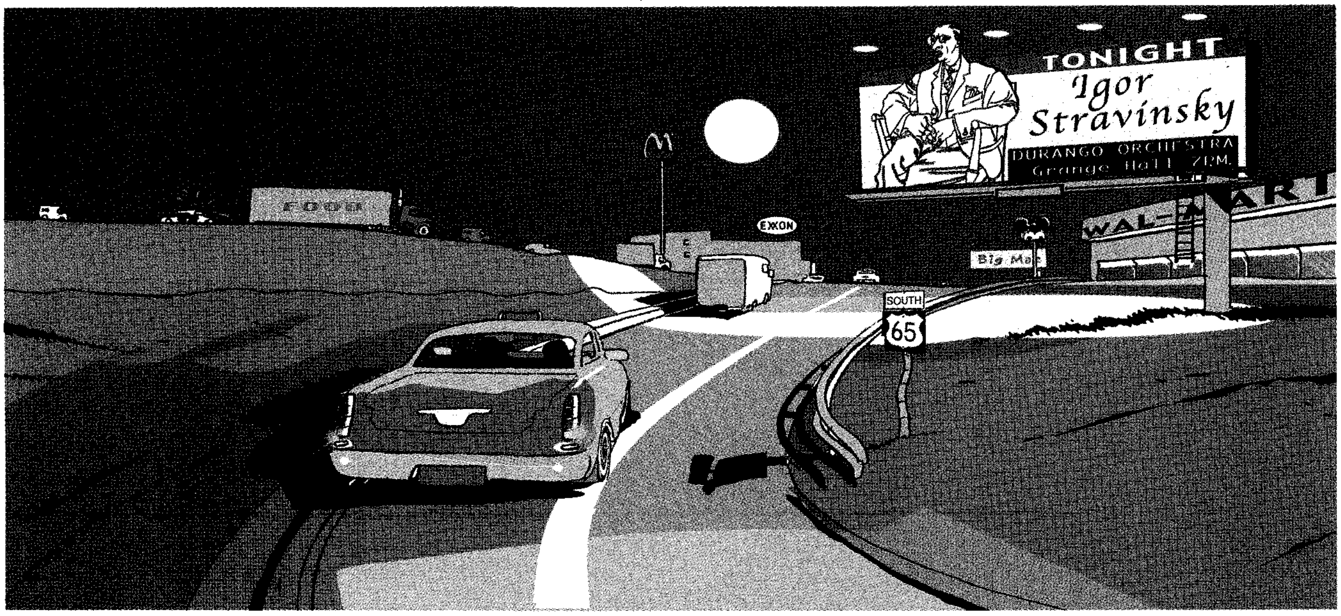
Since 2002, the music director in Indianapolis has been the Swiss-born conductor Mario Venzago. I heard the orchestra under the guest direction of Stéphane Denève, a towering, frizzy-haired, electric young Frenchman who has received semi-delirious reviews for his work at the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Denève drew out cleanly articulated, richly expressive performances of Berlioz's "Francs-Juges" Overture and Mahler's First Symphony. The ensemble showed strengths and weaknesses; occasional smudged notes appeared amid glowing textures. Ju-Fang Liu, the principal double-bass, played the solo in the third movement of the Mahler as elegantly and hauntingly as I've heard it.

Orchestras are obsessed these days with audience demographics. The average age is hovering in the mid-fifties; in Indianapolis the average seemed even higher, although school groups added diversity. There was a lot of nodding and dozing around the room, at least until Mahler unleashed his colossal dissonant chord in the finale. Seeing such an audience, you wonder who will show up a generation from now; then again, it's telling that, even back in 1970, half of the Seattle Symphony's listeners were over fifty. The classical audience has been skewing old for several decades, perhaps because this is one field of American culture where youth does not dictate content.

The Nashville Symphony, founded in 1945, just finished its first season in the new Schermerhorn Symphony Center, a hundred-and-twenty-three-million-dollar, eighteen-hundred-and-sixty-seat hall that stands across the street from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Defying the international trend toward sleekly contemporary concert-hall design, Schermerhorn is almost insolently traditional: the façade, with columns supporting a Grecian pediment of naked figures and a lyre, might have been trucked in from the Munich of King Ludwig II. The design won't win raves in *Metropolis*, but it contrasts effectively with Nashville's glass-and-steel skyline. The interior, a classic shoebox shape, evokes the fabled Musikverein, in Vienna, as do the richly reverberant acoustics. Too reverberant, perhaps: the music is sometimes lost in a somnolent haze. I ended up moving to a front row so I could hear more detail.

There were a lot of empty seats to choose from; the orchestra's Thursday-night concerts haven't been selling as well as the weekend ones, although over-all ticket sales have more than doubled this season. The audience seems more youthful than elsewhere; demographic analysts from the American Symphony Orchestra League will rejoice at the news that I ran into the *younger* sister of a high-school classmate. The program included a brief, elegiac piece entitled ". . . this noble company," by the young American composer Kevin Puts, along with Haydn's "Drumroll" Symphony and Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. Alasdair Neale, the guest conductor, elicited careful, emotionally neutral performances; the Bartók never caught fire, its ebullient, folkish phrases straitjacketed by a too even pulse. Yet the playing itself was polished nearly to perfection.

Amid the hoopla of its new home, the Nashville is undergoing a tricky transition. Kenneth Schermerhorn, the orchestra's longtime leader, for whom the new hall was named, died suddenly in 2005; he had helped put this orchestra on the map with a series of recordings on the Naxos label, including "West Side Story," Villa-Lobos's complete "Bachianas Brasileiras," and the new critical edition of Ives's Second Symphony. (Nashville's nine Naxos disks have sold well over a hundred thousand copies.) Leonard Slatkin is filling in as music adviser, but what the orchestra needs is an energetic, ambitious, preferably American director who can give a gifted group of players focus and fire.



Listening to America's regional orchestras, you realize that the notion of a stratospheric orchestral élite is deceptive.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Orchestras at the level of the Nashville used to be described as "regional" or "second tier," but increasingly they display the virtuoso panache of front-rank ensembles. The conservatories are producing wave after wave of almost excessively skilled players, and, like Ph.D.s in the humanities, hundreds of them fan out across the continent each year in search of jobs. They may stay with a regional orchestra for only a season or two before moving on to a higher salary, but they raise the level of playing as they go. A well-travelled soloist recently told me that players are often better than the conductors who lead them.

The Alabama Symphony is the happy reincarnation of an orchestra that was once given up for dead. In 1993, after years of crisis, this perennially underfunded organization went bankrupt. (A few orchestras usually go under in troubled economic times; six of them folded at the beginning of this decade, although all but one have got back on their feet or been replaced.) With the assistance of a stubborn band of donors and volunteers, the Alabama started up again in 1997. The orchestra is hardly drowning in cash—its budget is six million dollars, about a fourth of Nashville's or of Indianapolis's—but you wouldn't know it from listening to the music. A young Romanian concertmaster, Daniel Szasz, leads a violin section that plays with exceptional finesse and force. Winds and brass are rough in places, but passionate in their attack. All told, the orchestra calls to mind one of those old-school Central European ensembles that make up for a few technical shortcomings with musical intelligence and authentic style. Adding to the lustre of the group is the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center, whose main auditorium supplies a warm, bright acoustic.

Last fall, Alabama brought in a new music director, the English conductor and pianist Justin Brown. He strikes me as a conductor of substance. The program I heard followed well-worn grooves: Weber's "Freischütz" Overture, Elgar's Cello Concerto (with Anne Gastinel, a tensely lyrical soloist), and Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony. But Brown's programming hasn't lacked for daring. Already in his first season he has championed contemporary pieces by Poul Ruders, Kurt Schwertsik, and Magnus Lindberg. On one program next season, he will lead Elliott Carter's "Soundings" and Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto from the piano, then conduct Beethoven's Fifth after intermission. Another concert will bring together Ruders's "Light," Jonny Greenwood's "Popcorn Superhet Receiver," and the première of Paul Lansky's "Shapeshifters," for two pianos and orchestra. In less than a year, Brown has established the Alabama as one of the country's most adventurous regional orchestras.

At the same time, Brown, a forty-five-year-old Cambridge graduate, navigates the mainstream repertory with authority. His "Eroica" had a gritty, slow-burning intensity that reminded me of Otto Klemperer's monumental 1959 recording. In the G-minor variation in the finale, the one that sounds like a Turkish march, the strings dug in furiously, pushing the episode toward the tragic. Thinking about the performance afterward, I understood more deeply that building a major orchestra isn't a matter simply of gathering the best players from the leading conservatories and paying a celebrity maestro millions to lead them. Great performances can happen anytime skilled players respond with unusual fervor to a conductor whose vision is secure. That's what happened in Alabama, when an underpaid but committed orchestra put together as potent a performance of Beethoven's revolutionary symphony as I've heard in several seasons. ♦

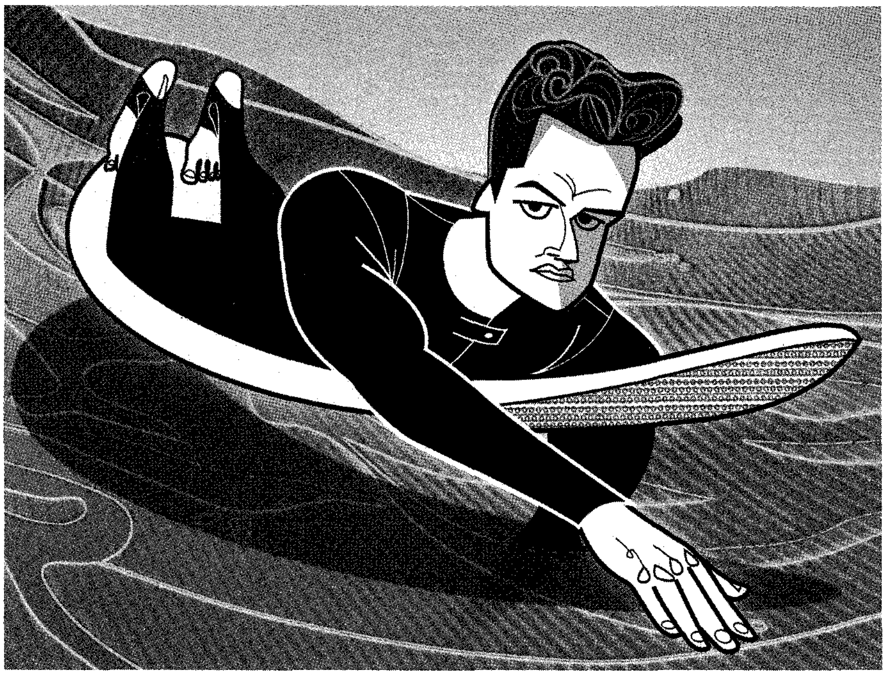
ON TELEVISION

DEAD IN THE WATER

David Milch on a surfing safari.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

You know how when you use a big bill to buy a train ticket or stamps from a vending machine and unexpectedly get a handful of Susan B. Anthony dollars as change you think, Oh, come on, this is no good—why didn't the machine warn me? I'm never going to be able to get rid of these—*nobody* wants them. I imagine that similar thoughts must have gone through the collective head of HBO upon delivery of David Milch's "John from Cincinnati," the series that began minutes after "The Sopranos" ended, two Sundays ago. Audiences, too, may have recoiled when they watched the first episode, and thought, Hey, don't try to pawn this off on me!



Austin Nichols as a mysterious stranger in "John from Cincinnati."

JONAS BERGSTRAND

HBO, on the strength of "The Sopranos," "Sex and the City," "The Wire," "Deadwood," "Entourage," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Six Feet Under," and a number of documentaries, has, with good reason, been regarded for almost a decade as the channel that can do no wrong. Because our expectations are now so high, and have so frequently been met and then exceeded, it's easy to be unduly disappointed and judgmental when a series isn't everything we want it to be. But it's not fair to think of HBO as HB Oh No every time a show flatlines. The channel itself seems worried at the moment, though; it aired a nervously jokey promo before the last episode of "The Sopranos," using the line "Endings make room for beginnings," and reassuring us that it has "more new series than ever before" coming up.

Who wouldn't be worried, with "John from Cincinnati" taking over as the channel's flagship for the next few months, in the Sunday-at-nine slot? A drama about surfing and spirituality, it takes place in the gritty border town of Imperial Beach, California, a stone's throw from Tijuana—a locale where Kem Nunn, who co-created "John," set one of the novels that have earned his work the term "surf noir." "John" centers on three generations of a fictional famous surfing family, the Yosts, and is as stunningly dull as Milch's previous series "NYPD Blue" and "Deadwood" were brilliant and penetrating. Mitch and Cissy Yost (Bruce Greenwood and Rebecca De Mornay) are the family elders; Mitch left the world of competitive surfing behind twenty years ago, because of a knee injury. Their son, Butchie (Brian Van Holt), who, we're told, revolutionized surfing when he was younger, stopped riding because he became a drug addict. Butchie's son, Shaun (Greyson Fletcher, the real-life scion of a surfing dynasty, whose grandparents, Herbie and Dibi Fletcher, are consulting producers of "J. from C."), is a sweet and beautiful thirteen-year-old with long blond hair, unsoured by life and a phenom in his own right, who lives with his hippieish but responsible grandparents. What tension there is—there's a lot of shouting and swearing and scowling in the series, but not much tension—is generated by Shaun's desire to go pro and get an agent and sponsors.

In interviews and in his work, Milch expounds upon his great subject: the oneness of things, the connectedness and indivisibility of all life. This trope ran like a vein of ore through "Deadwood," without calling much attention to itself. This time around, the theme has become viral, killing everything in its path. On Craig Ferguson's late-night talk show a couple of weeks ago, when Milch was asked what "John from Cincinnati" was about, he said, "If God were trying to reach out to us, and if he felt a certain urgency about it . . . that's what it's about." Going deeper, he went on, "The wave . . . is the only visible embodiment of what physicists tell us all matter is composed of, which is particles held together by some kind of magnetic or molecular force. And that's what makes the waves move." After Ferguson did a little hostly vamping in response, Milch added, "And if God were trying to reach out to us, and teach us something about the deepest nature of matter, he might use some drugged-out surfers."

It may be that God is trying to reach out and touch the Yosts, who could use a little redemption, through the presence of John (Austin Nichols), a clean-cut oddball who turns up at the beach one day when Mitch is out riding the waves (he still surfs, though always alone and evidently without joy) and whose first words—addressed to Luke Perry, who plays a surfing agent named Linc—are “The end is near.” (John’s last name is Monad—the word Leibniz used to encompass the concept of eternal, irreducible simplicity.) Or it may just be that John is touched. He speaks only when spoken to, and mostly parrots what people say to him, though he seems to have something invested in Mitch’s getting “back in the game.” In response to most questions, about where he’s from, who he is, why he’s here, John says, “Some things I know, and some things I don’t.” Butchie soon takes the mysterious stranger under his wing, since he seems to have lots of cash to subsidize Butchie’s drug habit. Irritated, as many viewers will be, by John’s “some things I know” mantra, Butchie instructs him to say, “ ‘I don’t know, Butchie,’ instead”—and John obeys, to the letter, saying that phrase over and over in response to everyone’s questions. John may be God’s rep, and catchy as an idea, but as a character he’s an overdose of sleeping pills.

In an episode in the last season of “The Sopranos,” when Tony is in the hospital, he takes part in a conversation with a fellow-patient, a scientist (played by Hal Holbrook) who talks about a theory of physics that has to do with the way all matter is connected (see Schrödinger); the conversation grows out of a boxing match that a group of patients are watching on TV. In other words, the ideas come out of the drama. In “John,” you get the feeling that Milch is using the characters as hooks on a pegboard, on which to hang his philosophical wares. The writing in the series just has no pleasure in it, not as it hits the ear or in terms of getting us any closer to these people and their problems, mundane or existential. Butchie, living in a derelict motel, is semi-feral—mangy, antisocial, and narrowly focussed on his own survival. A character is compelling when he’s becoming a junkie or trying to stop being a junkie—but an active junkie is never compelling, because he’s not struggling with anything. Milch and Nunn haven’t brought out the best in any of their performers: Van Holt barks his lines, Greenwood speaks in a monotone, De Mornay is wooden (and, at forty-seven, a little too young to play the grandmother of a teen-ager), Perry does a lot of squinting, and Nichols is a nonentity. Keala Kennelly, who plays Kai, a surf-shop employee and a friend of the family, isn’t a professional actor—she’s one of the top women big-wave surfers in the world. But she happens not to be much of a performer and, in the first three episodes at least, we never get to see her surf. It’s a lose-lose situation. The supporting cast features several ubiquitous character actors, who distract by their very familiarity. (The actual surfing in the show is shot well, but there isn’t much of it. Be sure to savor the opening-credits montage of old footage of longboards and men in the shorter bathing suits of several decades ago; it’ll make your gut tingle, and remind you that awesomely big fun can also lead to a feeling of oneness and connection. The credits blow the show, with its endlessly tedious dialogue, out of the water.)

What might turn out to work in “John” is whatever Milch can do with the complexities of the setting he’s chosen. In the first episode, while John and Linc (as in “link,” as in we’re all connected) are talking, we see a couple of blurry shapes darting through the brush—they’re Mexicans who have just run across the border. And when Mitch finishes surfing that day and is pouring fresh water over himself before getting into his car (and levitating, but let’s not get into that: you’ve already seen the image a hundred times in the promos and on posters all over town), we see a huge, hulking structure in the background, a shot that comes as a visual shock to anyone who isn’t familiar with this region: it looks like a giant spaceship. In fact, it’s the Tijuana bullring; in Nunn’s novel “Tijuana Straits,” the main character observes that it could pass for “the mother ship of some extraterrestrial and conquering race, settled there to survey its holdings.” Milch talks about being interested in borders (not in a strictly Lou Dobbs way but in a metaphysical way), yet so far he has done little to explore that interest.

It’s maddening to see a show this bad from someone so talented, but that’s how it works when you’re a real artist, and that’s how it should work. The person who creates a “Deadwood” is also probably going to make a “John from Cincinnati” one day. If you let him. Networks don’t let that happen; HBO does. It takes risks. Milch, who openly and frequently talks about his history of multiple addictions, has made much of the grace of second chances. In that spirit, I’m willing to believe that the series will improve, but not willing enough to stick around to see if it does.

And now, back to “The Sopranos.” I’m still cackling—I really am, I’m cackling—about the way the series ended. The end has been in sight for years, and yet, with all that advance warning, no one managed to predict the choice that David Chase made about the fate of Tony, his family, and his crew. And no one could have—that’s how original it was. What got people talking the day after wasn’t simply how Chase had resolved the plot dilemma of whether Tony would live or die; it was that he had done it, essentially, by killing off the viewers instead. The screen went black in mid-scene at the end of the last episode and stayed black for longer than we’re used to, and, like millions of other people, I thought there was something wrong with my TV. And there was: Chase had almost literally pulled the plug on it. It felt like a prank, but a legitimate and bracing one: it signalled that Chase was, make no mistake, done; and it let us know that this masterpiece we had been living with for eight years, this thing of ours, was ultimately this thing of *his*. No show that isn’t, in some way, directly about TV has ever been smarter or funnier than “The Sopranos” on the subject of TV—its place in our lives, what it does for us and to us. (And, not surprisingly, Chase’s final flourish passed immediately into the “The Clever TV Writer’s Treasury of Pop-Culture References”: two nights after “The Sopranos” ended, Jon Stewart used it as a gimmick on his show.)

It’s very much in keeping with the series as a whole that the ending was both abrupt and ambiguous, satisfying and worrisome. Right up to that final shot—and, in fact, in the blackness that followed—the show contained multitudes. As the immortal Paulie Walnuts said in the last episode, when he sat down after a big meal at Bobby Bacala’s funeral and unzipped his pants to give his full belly some breathing room, “In the midst of death, we are in life, henh? Or is it the other way around?” ♦

DANCING

OLD AND NEW

"Romeo + Juliet" and "The Sleeping Beauty."

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

In the nineteen-nineties, Peter Martins produced cool, clipped versions of "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Swan Lake." With his "Romeo + Juliet," unveiled last month at New York City Ballet, he has put another famous old piece in his refrigerator. The ballet we know as "Romeo and Juliet," which had its first incarnation in 1938, is a thundering, romantic business. Everywhere you turn, in most productions, someone is charging around in fabulous brocades, baying for blood. It is this empurpled quality, firmly supported by the Prokofiev score, which Martins has removed. As his set designer, he chose the Danish painter Per Kirkeby, who also did his "Swan Lake." Here, as there, Kirkeby supplied a series of curtains covered with abstract scrawls. Then, in the middle of the stage, he installed a little structure that looks like a two-car garage. This unit set serves as Juliet's bedchamber, Friar Laurence's cell, the Capulets' ballroom, the family crypt, and also the background for the balcony scene, though it has no balcony. Juliet hails Romeo from her roof, as if she lived in the Bronx.

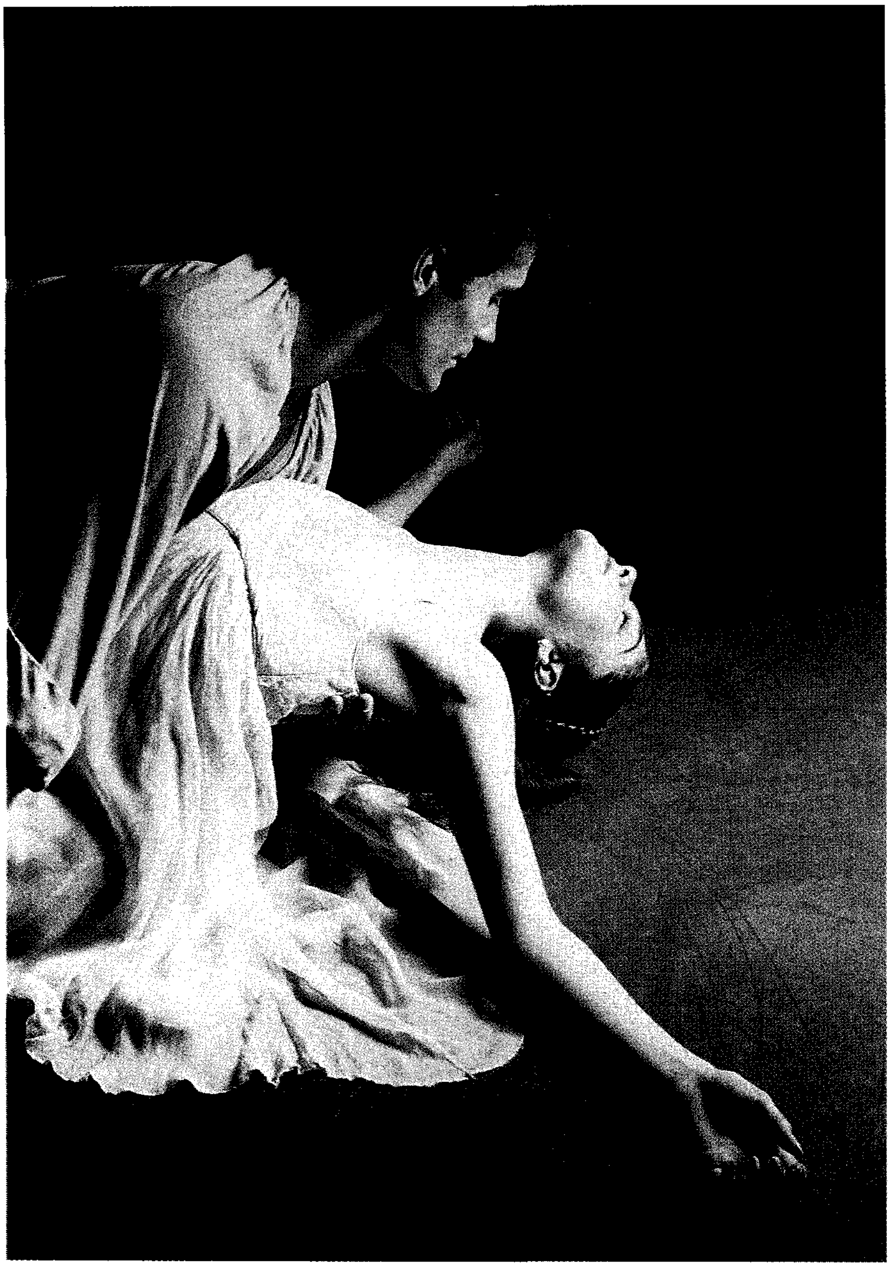
But the production's nay-saying goes further than that. The "Romeo" with which this one will be compared is Kenneth MacMillan's 1965 version. MacMillan's over-the-top, dunked-in-gold décor, by Nicholas Georgiadis, was obviously Martins's negative model for his own, and MacMillan's thrill-a-minute dramaturgy was apparently his counterexample in contriving the action. In the MacMillan, Romeo and Juliet's awakening after their wedding night is a scene of anguish. Juliet is wild with grief, both because Romeo has killed her cousin Tybalt and, conflictingly, because he has been banished from Verona for that crime and must part from her—which, at the end of the scene, he does. In Martins's version, Juliet again starts out unhappy, but then Romeo says he's sorry he killed Tybalt, and she cheers up, and the two of them go back to bed until Juliet's nurse finds them and chases Romeo out. In other words, Martins has turned a tragic episode into a comic one, and he does this repeatedly, in violation of the score. The music for the scene where Juliet's parents discover her "dead" (she has taken the sleeping potion) is tender and sad, which must have seemed corny to Martins, for he inserted a pratfall at this juncture. As Lady Capulet is running into the room, the nurse, running in the other direction, bangs into her and falls to the floor. It's like something from a Coen-brothers movie.

The choreography does nothing to restore the subtracted poignance. Martins has devised some nice quicksilver work for Mercutio, and there is a pretty, dainty duet for Juliet and Paris at the Capulets' ball. But those examples tell us something: the more insignificant a dance is emotionally, the more successful Martins is choreographically. It's when things get serious that he can't figure out what to do. Both in the great, stomping ensemble number at the ball, the ballet's premier symbol of violence, and in the balcony-scene duet, its chief display of love, the dancing is complicated without being interesting—Martins's choreographic trademark.

The show has one virtue. In the past five years or so, there has been a burst of remarkable new talent at N.Y.C.B., and Martins decided to feature these fledgling virtuosos in his "Romeo." Of all the Romeos, Juliets, Benvolios, and Mercutios in the four casts this season, not one was a principal dancer when the show opened. (The majority were still in the corps de ballet.) They didn't do much acting, but they all managed to convince you that they were teen-agers in love, and they tore up the place. My favorite leads were Kathryn Morgan and Seth Orza—they had a dignity that broke your heart—but the two other couples I saw, Sterling Hyltin/Robert Fairchild and Tiler Peck/Sean Suozzi, were also very good, as were the Benvolios and Mercutios. I will not soon forget Andrew Veyette's shot-from-guns performance of Mercutio's solo at the ball. I'll forget the rest of the ballet, but these young dancers should be honored for bringing to it whatever feeling it had.

While Martins was telling us that there is no Santa Claus, American Ballet Theatre was preparing an exceedingly idealistic new production of "The Sleeping Beauty": the work of Kevin McKenzie, the company's artistic director; Gelsey Kirkland, A.B.T.'s famous and infamous former ballerina (she co-authored the first and dirtiest ballet tell-all, the 1986 "Dancing on My Grave"); and Michael Chernov, an actor, director, and dramaturge who is also Kirkland's husband. In April, Kirkland and Chernov appeared in the Guggenheim Museum's excellent lecture-demonstration series "Works & Process," and explained their project. " 'The Sleeping Beauty' tends to be treated as something perfect," Kirkland said. "There's not a constant search for the truth in it." For the new production, Chernov said, the directors made such a search, and what they found was an allegory of good and evil—of innocence (the baby Princess Aurora) poisoned by wickedness (the fairy Carabosse), and then redeemed (by Prince Désiré, aided by the good Lilac Fairy). This is not a new idea, but clearly it gave the directors a platform on which to build their show. The allegory would be stressed, and the role of the Prince, as savior, would be expanded.

After the explanations, some A.B.T. dancers came out to perform excerpts from the ballet, with coaching by Kirkland. "It's about feeding birds," Kirkland said to the Breadcrumb Fairy, Yuriko Kajiya, about her variation. "Call them"—Kirkland now raised her arms, in summons—"then distribute the crumbs, and when they're happy they fly away." The little drama had to be enacted spontaneously, she added. "Go too far, Yuriko. Don't be careful." Kirkland's notes were touching, because they reminded you of what made her such a thrilling dancer: her dramatic focus and her wildness. Actually, the whole lecture-demo was moving. In old ballets—the first "Sleeping Beauty," choreographed by Marius Petipa, had its première in 1890—



N.Y.C.B.'s Seth Orza and Kathryn Morgan. Photograph by Elinor Carucci.

meanings tend to get lost in revision. In new ballets, there is often no meaning to start with. Anyone on a quest for significance in classical dance is therefore a friend. And so when the new "Sleeping Beauty" opened, early this month, and turned out to be something of a mess, you felt sorry for it.

Like many productions of the classics these days, it is abbreviated. Most of the Hunt scene is gone, and so are all but one of the storybook dances in the Wedding scene. As for the choreography that remains, Petipa's famous set pieces—the fairy variations, Aurora's birthday-party dances, the Bluebird number—have been retained. The rest has been newly choreographed by McKenzie and Kirkland or borrowed from other productions.

The result is a little choppy, but the weakness of the show lies not so much in its choreography as in the action that the directors have inserted in order to plump up the allegory. Basically, they have added a whole new subplot. In this version, the king and queen are exiled from their kingdom after Aurora is put to sleep, and the queen, in her sorrow, weeps a river of tears. A hundred years later, Prince Désiré comes on the scene, with a hunt party. The Prince is weary of his existence at court. He yearns for a serious moral life—an emotion that he expresses in a long example of what, in ballet, is called the "moody solo." At its end, he drinks from the river of tears, falls asleep, and is visited by the fairies from the Prologue, together with their cavaliers, who carry him around in the air. Soon, the Lilac Fairy, too, appears, and she conjures up a spectral Aurora, who dances with and for Désiré. This section, the so-called Vision scene, is part of the traditional scenario, but once it's over we are given new material again. Arriving at Aurora's castle, the Prince gets caught in a spiderweb installed there by Carabosse, but the Lilac Fairy frees him, causing Carabosse to stab herself with her cane and die. Then, and only then, do we get the kiss and the awakening.

Most of this is fast and confusing, and some of it doesn't work out technically. During the struggle with the spiderweb, Désiré has to stand on a tilted ledge high above the stage. In consequence, the Désirés I saw were so afraid of falling that they barely moved a muscle. But the biggest problem was that to supply music for Désiré's solo and dream the directors had to steal the entr'acte music that Tchaikovsky placed after the Vision scene and insert it into the Hunt, where it comes down more or less like a meat cleaver.

As in Martins's "Romeo," the dancers were better than the show. I saw two casts, one led by Gillian Murphy and David Hallberg, the other by Paloma Herrera and Angel Corella. Murphy is not an actress. (When she's happy, she dances with her mouth open; when she's sad, she closes it.) But she is probably stronger, technically, than any other female dancer in America, and so she can make a kind of story of steps alone. Hallberg, the company's newest star, is a great big, handsome guy from Arizona who doesn't seem to know that he's a star—he's extremely modest—but who has a beauty of line that is truly breathtaking, the more so since it is displayed on a body that is six feet two inches tall. Corella is not so modest, nor should he be. In the clarity of his steps, he reminds you of Baryshnikov. As for Paloma Herrera, something has happened to her. Is she in love? In any case, this Argentine dancer, who started out so brilliantly in the early nineties and then developed so stintingly, so cautiously, has now relaxed. In her demeanor and her phrasing, she communicated better than any moody solo or river of tears the qualities of affection and candor that according to this beloved old ballet can never be defeated, must always win out. ♦

THE ART WORLD

BIG IDEAS

The Venice Biennale.

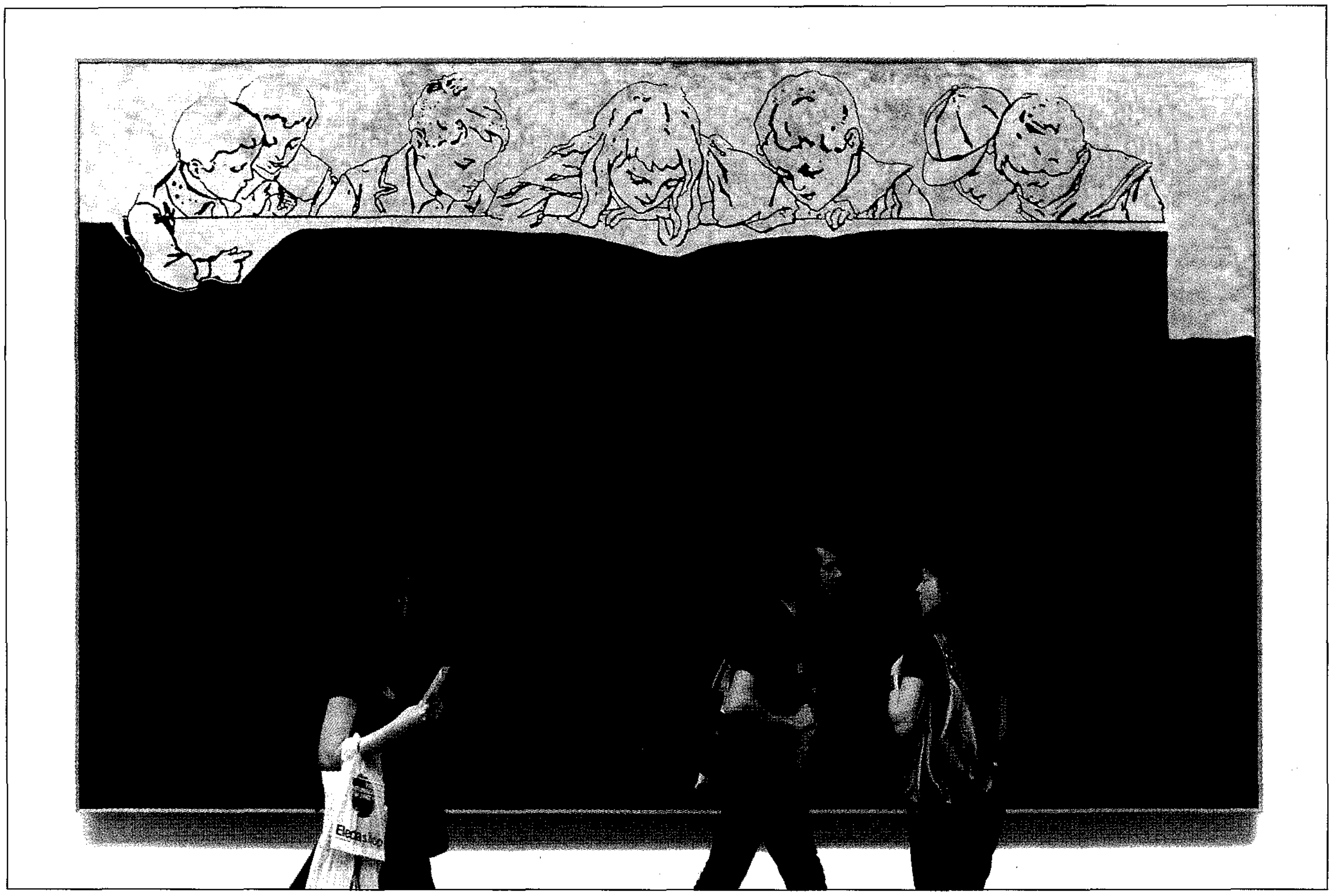
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"*Tranquila*," a Spanish observer was heard to judge, with a warmth just short of enthusiasm, on the opening day of the keenly anticipated fifty-second edition of the Venice Biennale—the most venerable of international art shows—directed by the American curator, critic, and teacher Robert Storr. That sounded on target to me. "Boring," or its equivalent in other languages, was an adjective more commonly bruited about, but I found myself looking sharply at those who uttered it and wishing they were more attentive. Many were collectors, dealers, and kibbitzers impatiently primed for the casino action of the Art Basel fair, which opened three days later. Others were a trusty contemporary type: the novelty addict. (Their ilk is served by auxiliary attractions in Venice, such as an entertaining show of the French billionaire François Pinault's violently trendy collection, at the Palazzo Grassi—champagne to the main event's tawny port.) For me, the conduciveness to meditation that holds up throughout the acres of new and newish international art in the Biennale's two main sites—the grandiose Fascist-era Italian Pavilion, featuring, as it usually does, a world-embracing exhibition of putatively top artists, and the quarter-mile-long Arsenale, an ancient facility of the Venetian fleet, devoted to emerging talent—borders on the miraculous. As the director, Storr curated both venues, laying a cool hand on the brow of today's money-fevered, intellectually dishevelled global art world. His presentations, grounded in his own personal tastes and loyalties, in the painting-rich Italian Pavilion, and in his penchant for melancholic political idealism, in an Arsenale that favors conceptual projects, court consideration of a genuinely critical sort. His effort is no less estimable for being, perhaps, quixotic. It thoroughly overshadows the village of national pavilions, in the leafy Giardini (overseen by curators from their home countries), whose local heroes—Great Britain's Tracey Emin, Germany's Isa Genzken, France's Sophie Calle—register, for the most part, wanly.

Storr was born in 1949, and earned an M.F.A. in painting (he still paints, though rarely shows his work) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1978. I have known him for years; he is a cosmopolitan of eager charm, formidable intelligence, and limited humor. (He is notorious for writing long, dense letters to editors, in hair-trigger response to perceived slights.) As a student spending a year abroad in France, he was swept up in the revolutionary fervor of 1968—a formative experience, he has said. He rose to prominence in New York in the nineteen-eighties as a critic championing artists at eccentric or challenging angles to fashionable taste, many of them women—notably Louise Bourgeois, Nancy Spero, Susan Rothenberg, and Elizabeth Murray—along with Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Gerhard Richter, and Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. (All these artists are prominent in Storr's shows. Another of his favorites, the late conceptualist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, commands the American pavilion this year, curated by other hands, to antiseptic, pious effect.) Storr was a curator at the Museum of Modern Art from 1990 to 2002—his exhibitions there included retrospectives of Richter, Max Beckmann, and Tony Smith—and a professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University from 2002 to 2006. He is now the dean of the Yale School of Art. The most anti-academic of academics, he has fiercely opposed rationalist theoretical tendencies in criticism, arguing for the priority of the artist's initiative and the viewer's intuition. As the first-ever American-born director of a Venice Biennale, he mounts his point of view on tank tracks, titling the event, with Storrian benevolent bossiness, "Think with the Senses—Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense."

The product is as lucid as its label is murky. It kicks off, in the Italian Pavilion, with a skylit exhibition of paintings by the paragon of antic irrationalism, Sigmar Polke: abstract works, with cartoonish elements, that are preposterously big on purpose, I think, to make sport of their own ambition. Translucent, in brownish pigmented resin, they are hypersensitive to the moods of the Venetian sky. Then come superb abstractions by established stars—Ellsworth Kelly, Richter, and Ryman—and by two veteran painters of small, tangy pictures, who should be better known, the American Thomas Nozkowski and the Belgian Raoul De Keyser. Storr hereby invites open-eyed aesthetic receptiveness for the mixed array that follows. There is a riveting new Nauman, "Venice Fountains," in which crude wax life masks spew water into sinks with faintly nightmarish relentlessness. (Many art folks cited this as the show's crown jewel.) Other successes are animations by the Americans Kara Walker (horrors of the Old South) and Joshua Mosley (clay figures of Pascal and Rousseau sharing lofty thoughts in real woods) and by the young Japanese master Ayako Tabata, who calls herself Tabaimo (big hands furnish a Victorian doll house that develops symptoms of organic distress, including erupting sea creatures). The Palestinian Emily Jacir elaborately documents the assassination of the Palestinian intellectual Wael Zwaiter by Israeli agents in Rome, in 1972, for an alleged role in the massacre of Israeli athletes at that year's Summer Olympics. (The incident is a stark episode in Steven Spielberg's "Munich.") Jacir is undoubtedly partisan, but her work allows for a range of reflections on the Middle East's world of pain. Its mournful ambiguities anticipate the prevailing elegiac, even despairing tenor of the Arsenale.

Like the Italian Pavilion, the Arsenale starts with a bang: "A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow," an installation by the Italian Luca Buvoli commemorating futurism, the move-



Sigmar Polke's "Jugendstil" (2005), in the Italian Pavilion, curated this year by Robert Storr.

EMANUELE CREMASCHI/EMBLEMA

ment that was announced in a manifesto by its leading propagandist, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, in 1909. (A year later, Marinetti leafleted Venice from atop the clock tower in St. Mark's Square.) Rakish sculptural elements in flimsy materials and rich colors apostrophize futurist forms and typography. Video documentary clips and animations evoke an artistic delirium that meshed with the afflatus of early Fascism. On two video screens, sufferers of aphasia struggle, in Italian and English, to read Marinetti's 1909 screed, with lines like "We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene!" Buvoli's bottomlessly ironic work does for Italy, in tones of light opera, something like what Anselm Kiefer's did a quarter century ago, in tones of Wagner, for Germany—bringing to consciousness a historical nexus of aesthetic rapture and political insanity. Stirring the very emotions that he criticizes, Buvoli eschews the starchy condescension of academic political art.

Much of the art in the Arsenale conveys similarly brave intimations of excitement and dread in the present day, without the advantage of hindsight. In a video of bombed-out ruins, a boy kicks around a human skull; people in photographs conduct normal daily lives at the fringes of minefields. Tiny drawings catalogue American war dead in Iraq and Afghanistan; a comic strip details an African's failed attempt to emigrate to Europe. In a huge mechanized mixed-media sculpture, an airliner repeatedly crashes in a city of skyscrapers. (With miserable prescience, it was made by the American Charles Gaines in 1997.) Is there no hope? There's some, of a solemn variety, in a great film by Yang Fudong, of China, "Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest," whose five parts punctuate the Arsenale. Its questing young heroes wander their country in black-and-white tableaux that are part scroll painting, part neo-Antonioni, and altogether entrancing. There is also a heartening separate section of zestful contemporary African art, "Check List Luanda Pop."

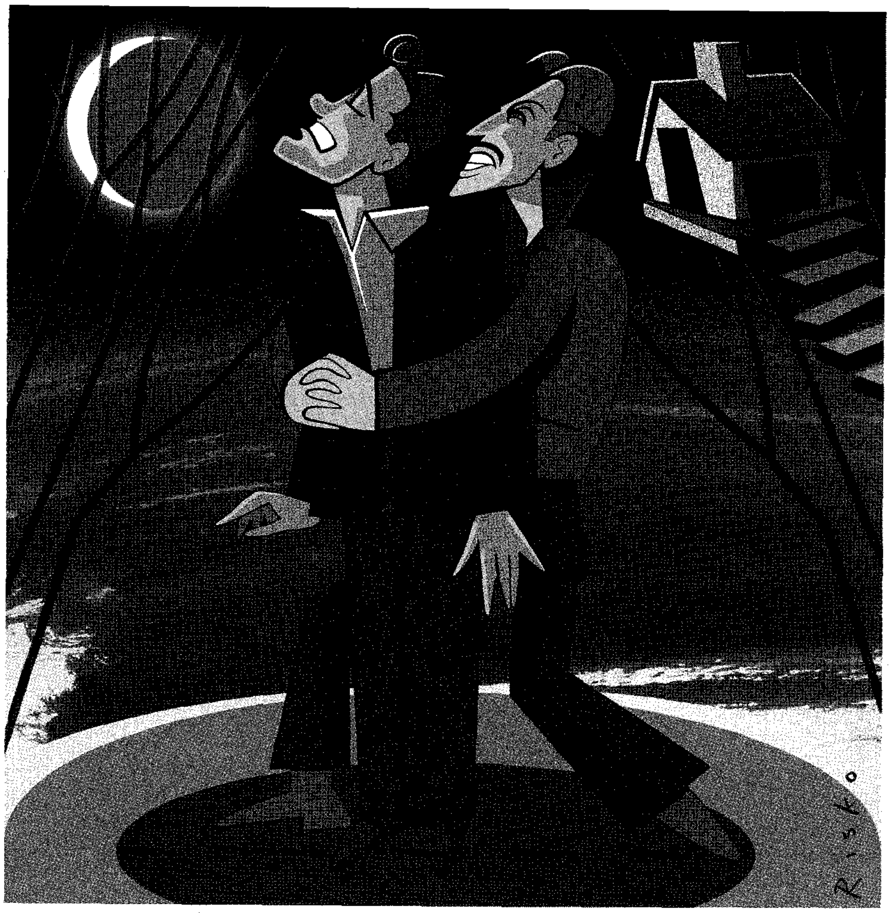
Visitors whose attention skates over the depths of perception and feeling in Storr's Biennale are not wrong, if the purpose of new art now is, as the dictatorship of commerce affirms, to enable a general glorying in products of creative crackle and fizz, never mind graver yearnings of the soul and dire news of the day. I can't condemn the skaters, given that sheer energy, no matter how apparently feckless, is always the truest sign of what will distinguish the art, and the styles of enthusiasm, in any era. Art doesn't change the world, and the world changes art only in ways that, whatever else they may be, are consistent with unforced pleasure. By insisting on contemplative absorption and civic conscience, Storr is a bit of a schoolmarm, demanding dignity of irresponsible pupils. But he marshals a lot of artistic talent to his side—and, for clarity and rhythm of presentation, his shows constitute by a long shot the most elegant of the several Biennales I've seen. I think the event will be remembered as a cautionary service, conservative in spirit and progressive in principle, to a frenetic time. ♦

THE THEATRE

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Neil LaBute on the perils of brotherly love.

BY JOHN LAHR



Ron Livingston and Frederick Weller in "In a Dark Dark House."

In the introduction to his most recent play, "In a Dark Dark House" (at the Lucille Lortel)—a drama about two estranged but rivalrous brothers coming to terms with their memories of the past, including those of an abusive father—Neil LaBute remembers his own late father, a truck driver who specialized in long hauls, as "a man who scared me much of the time. . . . He had all the charm and chill of an antisocial personality that managed to remain hidden from most people but was on full display in the 'safety' of the family home." A legacy of baleful distrust dominates LaBute's internal landscape, as well as the terrain of his unsettling plays. "There's a great deal of my father in a lot of the characters that people find somewhat unseemly," he told me in 1999.

When you gaze for long into the abyss, Nietzsche said, the abyss also gazes into you. "In a Dark Dark House," directed by Carolyn Cantor, is, according to LaBute, his first attempt to weave into dramatic fiction "a kernel of hard fact" about his own family, which is otherwise "shrouded in shadows and sadness." This is perhaps why the play, which deals with sexual jealousy, hatred, lies, and shame, has, by LaBute's own admission, given him so much trouble, and also why its characters work so hard to cover their tracks and to remain ignorant of the past. "In a Dark Dark House," like many of LaBute's plays, begins with the words "Silence. Darkness"—words that evoke the fog of childhood, which he has called "a veil of menace and murk and quiet."

Here, the feckless Drew (Ron Livingston), a wealthy but aberrant thirty-five-year-old disbarred lawyer turned real-estate whiz, whose drinking and womanizing are threatening his marriage, waits in his bathrobe on the greensward of a fancy rehab clinic for his older brother, Terry (Frederick Weller), to arrive. In Beowulf Boritt's effective set, a massive wall of earth and stone blocks out half the blue sky; it soon becomes an emblem of the formidable wall that the brothers have built between their deepest feelings and each other. Their father never appears onstage, but his spectral presence spurs much of the fear and subterfuge in the complicated unravelling of the narrative.

Terry, who is a security guard and three years older than Drew, is the apparent voice of maturity and normality. (He umpires Little League games in his spare time.) "Time to grow up," he upbraids Drew at the opening. Although he was a troubled youth, "thrown out of that family like a carton of bad milk" at fifteen after stealing a car, he was also Drew's childhood protector, a sort of security guard even then. (He escaped from Scout camp and stole the car evidently in order to warn the twelve-year-old Drew about the predatory sexual intentions of his lover, Todd, a college student who had befriended the family while hitchhiking across America.) "I fought every battle you had as a kid," Terry reminds Drew now. "Any bully, fucking beatings from the ol' man . . . all of it." Still, there is no love lost between them. To Terry, Drew is "a dick," "an idiot," a "wuss," a liar. "The 'truth' is not exactly your specialty," he says.

Where Terry seems to be direct and certain of his own goodness, Drew is closed down, evasive, and certain of his badness. "Just ask Judy," he says of his wife. "She keeps a running list of my transgressions in her purse." Drew employs the coded neutrality of hipspeak—"dude," "whatever"—to obfuscate his reality. He has been given an ultimatum by his wife to "get honest with her about my past—my history." Terry was summoned by the clinic's psychiatrists to confirm the existence of Todd, who Drew now claims, thanks to a recovered memory, interfered with him as a kid in

ROBERT RISKO

his tree-house fort, "*way* before" Terry came to warn him. "They're telling me that in lots of these cases it's a sibling or some family friend, a parent . . . a figure of some authority," Drew says. "Not some dude drifting 'cross the country." Todd, it turns out, was a formative figure in Terry's life—the first twist in a downward spiral that included the stolen car, nearly beating his father to death, and four years in juvenile prison. Although he feigns nonchalance at Drew's description of what went on in the tree house, when he's alone he reacts like a two-timed lover, tearing the cover off his cell phone.

Sometimes, no matter how good the writer and the writing, a narrative just doesn't flow right. Something essential in the conception or the construction skews its focus. "In a Dark Dark House" is full of strong lines, and also of LaBute's signature subversive moves, which generate a palpable sense of paranoia and unease. "That's the way we do in our fucking house," Terry tells Drew, when he accuses him of rewriting history. "We lie about it or we don't say shit; we clam up and don't utter a fucking syllable . . . about the real truth." But what is the real truth here? Where are we? What, exactly, is happening? The middle section of the play is given over to Terry's locating and seducing Todd's daughter, a sixteen-year-old virgin named Jennifer (Louisa Krause), who works at her father's miniature-golf business. Is this perverse romance or revenge? Is Drew's tale of molestation merely a strategy to get him out of rehab or has he actually been abused, and, if so, by whom? Do the brothers finally make a connection, or is their promise at the finale to "talk about stuff" just another masquerade? The play abounds in hints, clues, allusions; in fact, it is a sort of MacGuffin hotel. What certainties do emerge come from exposition, not from action. The experience is at once powerful and powerfully confounding. What is the personal truth of Terry and Drew? The liars onstage need not know it, but the author must. My guess is that, for once, LaBute isn't sure.

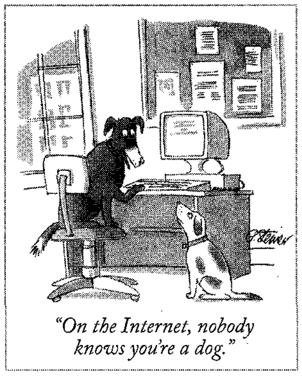
If "In a Dark Dark House" is a slippery slope on which you can't quite get traction, "10 Million Miles," a fetching country-and-Western musical (at the Atlantic Theatre Company), is as straight and accessible as I-95, the road that its two romantic lost souls take from their backwater town in Florida to Worcester, Massachusetts. Molly (Irene Molloy), who is two months pregnant and only recently sober, is heading north to have her baby and give it up for adoption; Duane (Matthew Morrison), who may or may not be the father, is heading north to change his luck. "I'm not going with you" are Molly's first words, when she arrives at his red Toyota pickup truck with her bag packed; in the land of musicals, you know what that means.

The director, Michael Mayer, who also took on "Spring Awakening," is successfully mining new seams of expression in the American musical. Here, in a show that is really a road movie with music, he, along with Patty Griffin (music and lyrics) and Keith Bunin (book), teases poignance and nuance out of longing. Griffin's musical palette may be limited, but she has a genuine lyrical gift, and her compassion and candor are delivered in a refreshing folk idiom. "She's hard wood to whittle," Duane sings of his stroppy sidekick, a line that rhymes with "noncommittal" and that could never have been written in the Brill Building. Griffin writes well about the exhilaration of love, and she parses melancholy with a special bittersweetness. In "Icicles," she writes:

We're just like anyone else
We just want a little bit of sun for ourselves
And a little bit of rain to make it all grow
Maybe a minute or two to get lost in the glow
Of love

Although "10 Million Miles," with its four actors and six-piece band, has a compelling modesty, there's nothing small about the theatrical imaginations at work in it. Every stage moment is sculpted with a taste and tact that draw the audience in. On their journey, the lovers encounter various other characters, miniatures who are given high definition by Skipp Sudduth and Mare Winningham. But, in the end, it's the chemistry between the lovers that makes the story work. Molloy holds her own with the buff, crew-cut Morrison, which is saying a lot. Morrison just has that incandescent thing, and the show provides all the oxygen that he needs to glow. ♦

HUMOROUS
HOUNDS



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Peter Steiner, 1993

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

DISCOVERIES

"A Mighty Heart" and "Nancy Drew."

BY ANTHONY LANE

How do you solve a problem like Angelina? Ms. Jolie is now more of a brand than a person, and she comes in six flavors:

1. The celebrity. Angelina Jolie is so famous that when she looks in the mirror her reflection asks for an autograph. The only publication in this country yet to feature her on its cover is *The American Numismatic Magazine*, and even that will change the moment she bends down to pick up a nickel.

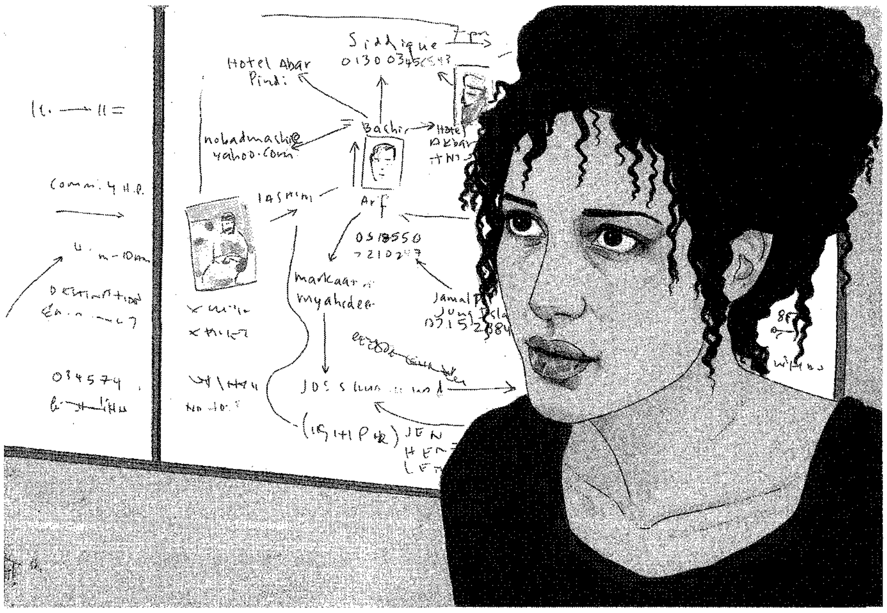
2. The sexpot. In this she is unchallenged, and yet her timing is off by fifty years. When it comes to channelling her carnal appeal, no current film director has a clue; the guy she needs is Frank Tashlin, who guided Jayne Mansfield through "The Girl Can't Help It" (1956) and "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" (1957), and whose eyeballs, if confronted with Jolie in the flesh, would pop out on cartoon springs and bob around.

3. The Brad handler. She took one look at the world's most widely desired man and scooped him up with no more ado than a Parisian grande dame tucking a Chihuahua into her clutch bag.

4. The mother. Official estimates as to how many children Jolie now possesses, and from how many continents, change on a weekly basis. When not giving birth herself, she likes to order in. How this has affected Mr. Pitt is unclear, but his expression is sometimes that of a man who stepped out to hail a cab and got run over by a fleet of trucks.

5. The world saver. Jolie is a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Her father, Jon Voight, told the Biography Channel that "she's developed into one of our great humanitarians." This was clearly on the minds of political leaders when they met Jolie at a summit of the World Economic Forum in Davos two years ago. Half of them offered their entire foreign-aid budget for a chance to fetch her a mai tai.

6. Oh yes, the actress. This last talent, so often neglected, is displayed in her new film, "A Mighty Heart," and without it the legend of Angelina Jolie would be little more than a vaporous joke.



Angelina Jolie as Mariane Pearl in Michael Winterbottom's movie.

LARA TOMLIN

The movie, directed by Michael Winterbottom, lies about as far from the trials of Lara Croft as is cinematically possible. Jolie plays Mariane Pearl, the wife of Daniel Pearl (Dan Futterman), a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* who in 2002 was kidnapped and beheaded in Karachi, Pakistan. The story begins on the day of his disappearance; as the horrors unfurl, we see Mariane replaying in her mind the moment when she bade her husband farewell—a wave and a smile, as he climbed into a cab. He was due to interview a Muslim cleric named Sheikh Gilani, but the arrangement was a trap.

Once Pearl has vanished, we follow the threads of rumor and report from the viewpoint of his wife, a cluster of friends, and the local police. The result, like many of Winterbottom's films, lies an inch short of disarray; we *can* keep pace with the investigation, but only just, and that sense of splintering honors the unpredictability of the setting. We hurtle from the tracking down of taxi-drivers to the tracing of cell-phone calls and nocturnal raids on the homes of suspects; such momentum is undeniably but unpleasantly exciting, because we already know the outcome. However diligent the authorities' chase against the clock, the clock will win. Promising leads hit a wall; when Mariane gets to see Pakistan's Interior Minister, he blames the Indian intelligence services for having set up the abduction. Add the aggressive questioning of Daniel's female colleague, Asra (Archie Panjabi), who happens to be Indian, and you get an itchy demonstration of regional mistrust.

Stronger still than the encroaching panic, however, is Mariane's determination not to cave in to it. Those who saw her being interviewed at the time were struck by her preternatural serenity; her book, also called "A Mighty Heart" (2003), is Winterbottom's principal source, although her title may be too noble for his manner—the dressed-down, on-the-fly approach that lends even his more formal endeavors, like "Jude" (1996) and "Code 46" (2003), an air of documentary. He is the very model of a modern moral filmmaker: not unromantic, exactly, and too impassioned for the scowls of cynicism, but baffled and perhaps a little bored by the traditional forms of romance. When his loving couples cling together—as they did, stickily, for "9 Songs" (2004)—Winterbottom loses interest. When they are yanked apart, as in "A Mighty Heart," his own heart quickens its beat.

Mariane is French-speaking, with a Cuban mother, and Jolie is equipped with corkscrewed hair, tinted skin, and murmuring accent. We brace ourselves for a star turn, a hundred minutes of vanity project, but here's the thing: it never happens. Jolie slips into the part, ducks in and out of the action, and generally plays second string to the onrush of events. Blessed with the world's most recognizable mouth, she confines herself to a single, skeptical pout, as Mariane is reassured that "no one would ever want to hurt Danny." Not so: he is an American Jew investigating Muslim extremists, and, as his wife knows, that makes him a marked man.

Only once does Mariane crack. Informed of her husband's death and of its savage circumstances, she goes to her room, crouches over, and keens. It could be the howl from a Greek tragedy, except that our heroine is not disporting herself on a stage, majestic in her grief, but filmed from so close that you can count the knobs of vertebrae at the top of her spine. By this time she is heavily pregnant, and her screams are a terrible parody of birth pangs—an echo that Winterbottom makes explicit, without needing to, in the closing scenes. This hasty, high-intensity, barely consolable film is just the kind of tale on which he thrives—and, more surprisingly, on which Jolie will come to depend if she wants to keep her head above the tides of madness in which, partly on her own initiative, she has chosen to float. Will success spoil Angelina Jolie? Not yet. Can she help it? Yes, she can.

"Aunt Julia! Aunt Julia!" cried the girl in the long socks and the penny loafers. Her name was Emma Roberts, and she was sixteen.

"Why, what is it?" exclaimed Aunt Julia, a pretty woman who would not give her age. She was over by the window of the living room, rearranging her photographs of disastrous fiancés.

"I have finished with Nancy Drew," replied Emma disappointedly.

"My goodness! Well, sometimes these things are not meant to last," sighed her aunt.

"Don't be silly!" corrected the girl. "Nancy is not a person. She is a fictional construct, created in 1930 by Carolyn Keene, herself a pseudonym under whom simply *tons* of different yet equally useless writers have taken shelter. Don't you remember? I went off to play Miss Drew in the new movie. I was encouraged to do so by the example of my father, Eric, himself an actor, though never in the same wage bracket as you, his more famous sister. Not that he minded!" she added with a silvery laugh.

Aunt Julia smiled, something she seldom did in public for less than twenty million dollars.

"And tell me, what was it like?"

"It was splendid," replied Emma, pausing to adjust the headband on her fine reddish hair. "The story begins in River Heights, a town full of delightful white people. I am motherless and my father is a lawyer, so both of us are rather sad! For a treat we move to Los Angeles, where the girls at my new school say I remind them of Martha Stewart. They are so 'right on,' it really is a joy!"

"And what happens next?" asked Emma's aunt, her excitement mounting.

"Well, the house the Drews are renting once belonged to a movie star—you know, one of the super-old ones."

"Like Lana Turner?"

"Who?"

"Skip it. Who plays the part of the actress?"

"The beautiful Miss Laura Elena Harring. After some ace detective work, I discovered that she was in a film called 'Mulholland Drive,' which dealt with similar material. Isn't that coincidence just a little *too* suspicious? And the plot leads Nancy to a resort by the name of Twin Palms. Another clue! To sum up, a friend of mine said the film was like Lynch without the lesbians or the dwarves. What are lesbians, Aunt? Are they friends of Snow White's, too?"

"More than you will ever know, dear."

"Oh, Aunt Julia, come to the première, please do. I shall take a tray of cupcakes."

"I—I—" Her aunt's voice faltered.

"Why, what is it?"

"I doubt if any female over the age of twelve would get much pleasure from the film," she hazarded.

Emma giggled. "Oh, Aunt Julia, you may be old, but you're not *that* old. Not just yet!"

Her aunt's hand crept toward the heavy glass paperweight that stood on the side table next to a portrait of Lyle Lovett, which, while in soft focus, was not quite soft enough. What *was* she thinking? Finally, she spoke:

"Oh, I'm sure the film will do as well as it deserves!" ♦

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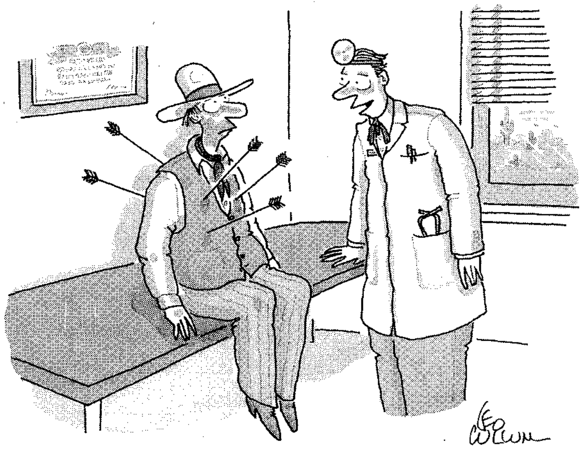
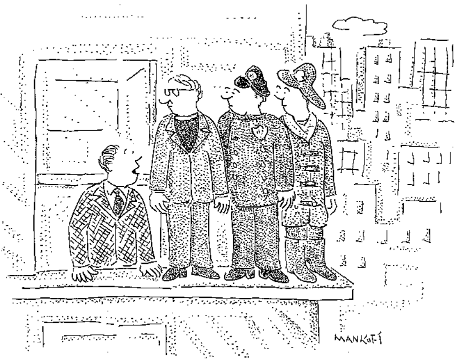
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mike Twohy, must be received by Sunday, June 24th. Finalists in the June 4th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 9th & 16th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I'd like to get your arrow count down."
David Wilkner, Pawtucket, R.I.



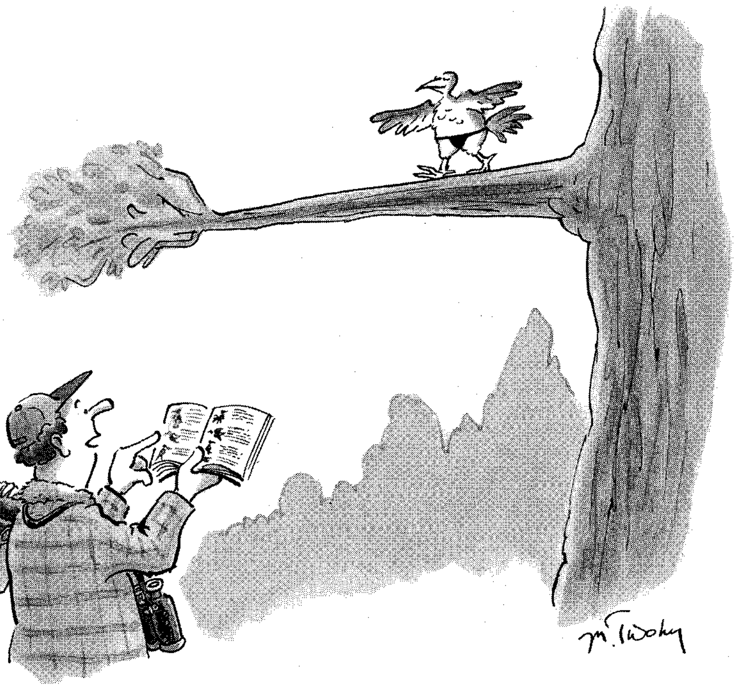
THE FINALISTS

"Fellas, your empathy for victims is outstanding."
Darryl Brown, New York City

"Excuse me—does this joke need a lawyer?"
Eric Friedenwald-Fishman, Portland, Ore.

"I know this may not be a good time, but the rioters are burning down the cathedral!"
Carlton Holt, Albuquerque, N.M.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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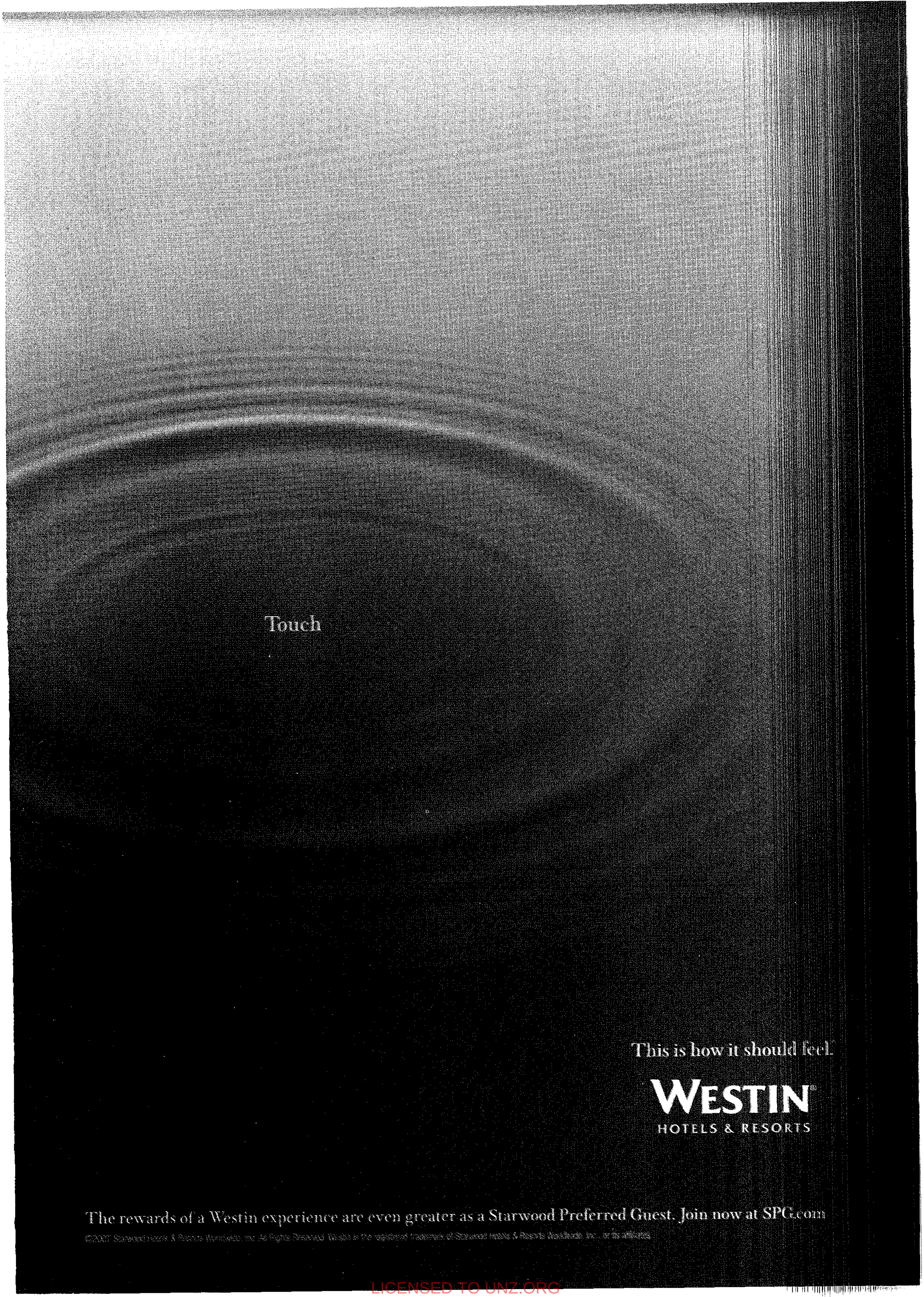

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